



NOW THEN.

MARTIN MACHADO. MEDIALENS. MOUNT KIMBIE.
A MAGAZINE FOR SHEFFIELD. ISSUE 38. FREE.

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NOW THEN IS A FREE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE IN SHEFFIELD.

We aim to cultivate choice, voice and responsibility by providing a platform for independent art, trade, music, writing and local news. We support Sheffield's economy by only working with independent traders, community groups, charities and local government.

Almost all articles published in this magazine are written by members of the community, not professionals. If you don't like what you read or have something that needs to be said, get in touch.

Your opinions make Now Then what it is.

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Enjoy the read.

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EDITORIAL.

I reckon we've had our summer now. No more hot weather until next year. BBQs in the snow. Paddling pools full of rain.

If that really is the case, we should all be doing some sort of sun dance ahead of Peace in the Park Festival on 4th June. If you have never heard of Sheffield's most peaceful cultural rendezvous, turn to page 48 sharpish and we'll let you off. If you have heard of it, you'll know it is one of the city's best-loved annual festivals, packed full of song, dance, food, drink and merriment. And that doesn't even include the evening celebrations. Don't miss it.

Now Then #38 sports interviews with Media Lens and Mount Kimbie, on top of the usual local and (inter) national pieces, including a Wordlife prose special and the re-emergence of 27b/6.

Come down to the Forum on 8th May to celebrate our third birthday as a magazine, with performances from Bell Hagg Orkestar and Zacc Rogers.

SAM.

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LOCALCHECK.

MAY GOINGS ON.
HOSTED BY ALT-SHEFF.

The spirit of freedom and equality is blowing through Sheffield’s rebellious streets like a summer breeze. It’s May, and the season kicks off with another Temporary Autonomous Arts (TAA) extravaganza coming to a secret site somewhere between 19th and 21st. Arts, films, performances, stuff for kids, music, loadsa fun from the Art and Soul Kollektive (ASK). Last year’s urban myth was that the venue was squatted, but Sheffield’s finest police actually gave our brave urban explorers an emergency phone number in case of attack by the property speculator’s henchmen...

Next up is Sheffield’s annual Anarchist Book Fair on Saturday 21st May, 10am to 6pm at Bank Street Arts. This promises to be a full day, with publishers, book sales, comics, art and food. Discussion sessions will range from beginners’ introductions to activist security. Film screenings include one called “Bastards of Utopia” ... What!? Author David Harvie will be talking about “Moments of Excess: Movements, Protest and Everyday Life” by The Free Association. And there will surely be a social in the evening. If this all seems a bit revolutionary, you need to know that there’s a fine, proud tradition of anarchist thought, activism and philosophy which goes right back as far as the origins of Marxism, maybe much further. It challenges all forms of power and hierarchy, from the day-to-day annoyances to state domination and crazy greedy capitalism. Sheffield has a rich history and grassroots network of anarchist activity, from anarcho-feminism through various collectives, to the recently-formed Mutual Aid Sheffield (MASH). Watch this space: it’s just been reclaimed!

ASKSHEFFIELD.ORG
BOOKFAIR.ORG.UK
MUTUALAIDSHEFF.ORG

Another call to arms, hands and purses in a battle of the people and the stuff that’s good about our city vs. the forces of property “development”. Take a stroll over to Portland Works on Randall Street, just behind St. Mary’s roundabout, or go to portlandworks.co.uk to see the coolest, most rightful use of old Sheffield in new times. This place really has some history, since it is thought the world’s first ever stainless steel cutlery was made there. It’s got Sheffield’s only “little mesters” shops still in use in the metal trades. And that’s not all. It also houses musicians and artists, engineering and woodcrafts - a buzzing part of the local economy, with dozens of people working and loads of potential.

The plan is for one of Sheffield’s first ever “community buy-outs” before it is part-demolished to make more flats and offices that we don’t really need. It could be improved even more. Long-term ideas range from a roof garden and sculptures to performance art. Almost everyone seems to agree this would be fantastic, so the landlord has withdrawn his planning application to allow time for tenants and supporters to develop their solid alternative blueprint. These volunteers are vital. If you can help with ideas or knowledge then now is the time to come forward. The really crucial bit is to raise the money to buy the building as soon as possible, so the next step is a massively important share issue coming up in June. Fancy owning a part in some property run on social and cooperative principles? Every £100 share will make a difference. Think about it and get in touch.

Don’t miss Steel City Pulse at Portland Works on 7th May, a percussion performance to raise money for the Save Portland Works campaign.

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HEELEY CITY FARM.

GREEN SINCE '81.

VICTORIA RICHMAN.

Going green has become a fashion trend in the last few years, something for celebrities to hitch their star to.

Suddenly knobbly shaped vegetables covered in dirt are in, as is veganism and biodegradable everything. Like a long-established band that suddenly have a top ten hit, environmental friendliness has suddenly got itself a lot more followers. Yet these new disciples tend to eclipse the dedication of long-time fans. One such diehard green fan and promoter is Heeley City Farm. For over thirty years the charity has been dedicated to protecting the environment and promoting conservation in Sheffield. Its conception in 1981 was a triumph of conservation over industrial expansion. The farm was built on the site of a row of houses that were demolished to make way for a new ring road. Local people protested and the road was never built. On the wasteland left they built Heeley City Farm.

'Farm' is a term that only covers a small proportion of the work they do. Of course they are a working farm and their main attractions are the animals. Visiting the farm is an enjoyable way to take a break from reality and be transported back to your childhood - chasing chickens, cooing at piglets and having bags of food stolen by greedy goats.

The animals are only the start of Heeley Farm's multifaceted enterprise. In fact it is their ends which are the start; their manure goes into the compost that is used to grow the farm's organic plants and vegetables. These are sold in the farm's garden centre, the only peat free garden centre in the area, and used in the wonderful vegetarian meals and sumptuous cakes which are produced in the Farm Kitchen. The scraps and waste are then recycled again as compost, and so the cycle continues. Not much is wasted, especially waste.

The farm also works in conjunction with other local produce brands and suppliers, such as The Sheffield Honey Company, supporting local business and ensuring the best quality, organic ingredients.

Still, this is not all they do in support of conservation. They also house the South Yorkshire Energy Centre. The centre is an eco refurbished house that demonstrates energy saving techniques. Solar panels heat the water and sheep wool insulates the walls. It has interactive displays such as 'The Human Power Station', where visitors work up a sweat pedalling to light up a bulb. The dedicated staff at the Energy Centre offer free advice on conserving energy within the household and saving on domestic bills.

They are so much part of the community that they are involved in the annual Heeley Summer Festival. Last year's festival attracted 3,000 people to the farm and a stage hosted local bands like King Capisce and Jungle Lion. There were over thirty stalls, a beer tent, a BBQ and many other attractions.

This year it's the farms 30th birthday and the celebrations are going to be part of the Heeley Summer Festival, which will be held on 18th July. It is one of many events held at Heeley, varying from art exhibitions to 'Fuel Busting' days.

This industrious little slice of Eden is worth visiting, not only for the animals, events or to collect your £3.50 bag of manure, but also to discover a company that got on the green bandwagon long before everyone else. And they'll still be on it long after everyone else gets off.

heeleyfarm.org.uk





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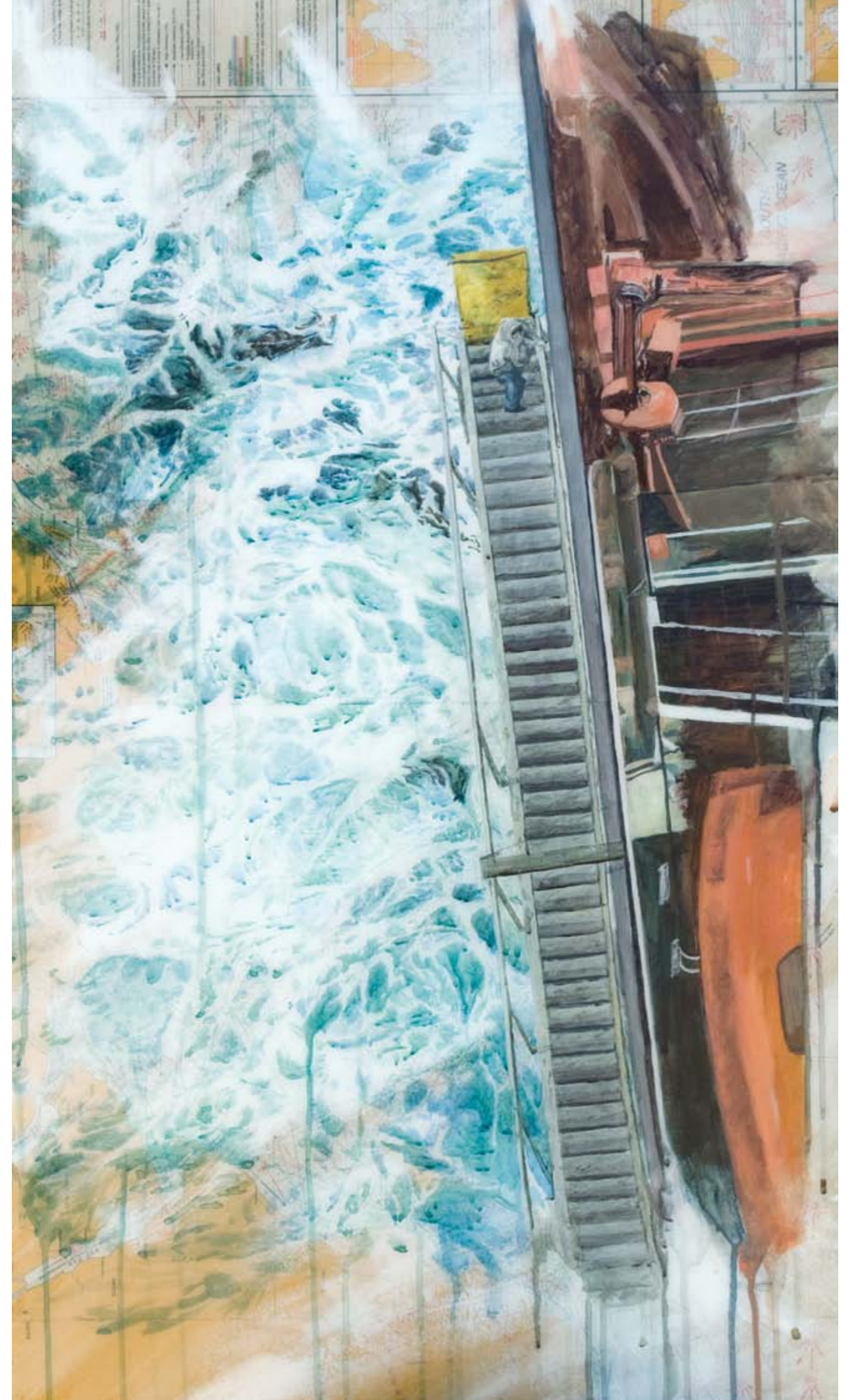
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MEDIA LENS.

CORRECTING FOR THE DISTORTED VISION OF THE CORPORATE MEDIA.

INTERVIEW BY SAM WALBY.

Media Lens is a media analysis organisation set up by David Edwards and David Cromwell in 2001 to highlight the shortcomings of mainstream media reporting in Britain. Sending out regular email alerts to its subscribers, it questions the coverage of key topics by ‘impartial’ sources like the BBC, as well as traditionally liberal publications like the Independent. Ultimately, it hopes to encourage members of the public to challenge journalists and editors over the way they report.

After publishing a couple of Media Lens alerts in Now Then in the past few months, we spoke to David Edwards about the venture and how it got off the ground on the month of its 10th anniversary.

Was there any event, experience or revelation in particular that led you to set up Media Lens?

There were perhaps two particular political triggers and one more philosophical trigger. The political issues included the US-UK-led sanctions regime (1990-2003) that killed around one million Iraqi civilians. In 2000, I met and interviewed Denis Halliday, who had set up the UN’s oil for food programme in Baghdad. In 1998, he resigned after a long and illustrious career at the UN, describing the policy he himself had implemented as “genocidal”. The media suppression of the truth about the effect of the sanctions and Halliday’s attempt to blow the whistle really made me feel something had to be done to challenge the media in the UK. The second issue was climate change. I had first campaigned for action in the mid 80s, but by 2000 the media were still celebrating the idea that Britain might soon be blessed with a Mediterranean climate. The level of ignorance and indifference was amazing.

I had also long been interested in the work of Erich Fromm, who had written of how a society that subordinates people and planet to profit is inherently insane and toxic. Again, it was clear to me that the media had every interest in suppressing these issues – they are part of a system that needs us to sell our souls for high status production and consumption. So it’s not just politics – every aspect of human experience is distorted and filtered in a way that reflects the needs of corporate power rather than the needs of human wellbeing.

How has Media Lens developed over the years?

The main development has been that donations from readers have slowly allowed us to do less paid work outside Media Lens. I was able to support myself part-time on Media Lens from 2003 and full-time from 2009. David Cromwell became full-time last autumn. When we first started in 2001, it seemed that people wrote to journalists only in response to our media alerts. Now huge numbers of people write to journalists without any prompting from us. Hopefully we’ve helped encourage that, but no doubt it’s also just a natural trend in the development of the internet.

What steps can members of the public take to get the bigger picture with regards to current affairs?

People need to find sources they can trust. That can be quite difficult because there are numerous crazies writing on the net, some of them very persuasively. The best way is to test writers who seem rational, to check their claims against the facts and other viewpoints. Over time, you can see that some people are able to make sense of the world. I think Noam Chomsky is a very reliable source, so one answer is to read Chomsky and then read the authors he recommends, and so on.

Great websites of this kind are Democracy Now!, ZNet, The Real News Network and FAIR. If you watch Democracy Now, for example, you’ll see people like Daniel Ellsberg, Norman Solomon, Glenn Greenwald, Michael Moore, Chris Hedges and Gareth Porter talking honestly and courageously. Then you follow their writing and their sources and the trail continues. A great rule of thumb is that remarkable claims require remarkable evidence. A lot of cranks make huge claims with no serious, checkable evidence – that’s a warning sign.

What can journalists themselves do to resist the corrupting power of market forces on reporting?

They can, and do, try to squeeze in dissent. This is what the best journalists like George Monbiot, John Pilger and Robert Fisk are doing. They can also blow the whistle, if only privately to organisations like Media Lens. Or they can take the route chosen by former Guardian journalist Jonathan Cook, who walked out of the mainstream, became an independent and is now writing some of the most interesting and honest commentary on journalism I’ve ever seen.

In the age of the internet, the grounds for compromising and conforming to the corporate media system are falling away. People like us can survive on public donations, and it is possible to reach a mass audience outside the mainstream, which was almost completely impossible before. We can imagine a future where the best mainstream dissidents will boycott the corporate media and form an Honest Journalism Cooperative, or something similar.

Is a donations system like yours the best way for publications to free themselves from corporate interests?

It seems too easy, doesn’t it? We’ve managed it, which we would never have dreamed was possible when we started in 2001. We currently have no support other than public donations. We also have no wealthy donors – it’s all down to ordinary readers sending £1, £2, £5 a month. Isn’t it obvious that the public will support honest journalism that actually explains the world and that is motivated by compassion for suffering? Of course they will! Everyone is sick to the back teeth of confusing, deceptive, compromised, ‘nuanced’ corporate reporting that favours elite sources and elite viewpoints – these awful colour supplements packed with luxury advertising, lifestyle articles and endless guff that have been casting a pall over people’s Sunday mornings for years. Mainstream journalism is so tedious, almost never explains anything and is deeply pacifying.

People are willing to pay for honest journalism, but it must be completely uncompromised. At the moment there is no completely uncompromised mainstream journalism. How many journalists have seriously examined the corporate structure and history of the mainstream media and used this as a basis for examining its claims to honesty and accuracy? Pilger has done the best work, but actually none of them have really gone into it.

Do you believe it is possible to deliver news with neutrality, as providers like the BBC claim?

What does ‘neutrality’ even mean? A doctor studies a patient, works out the likely source and cause of the illness, and seeks to resolve the problem. Should the doctor remain neutral and unbiased in wanting the patient to be well or ill? What I’m saying is that we should be human. We should be biased against suffering, which doesn’t mean we will be 100% accurate. We should support our analysis with an honest use of facts and sources. We shouldn’t try to hide details or ignore credible sources contradicting our arguments. We should do our best to uncover the real causes of suffering and promote the likely best solutions.

The idea that professional journalistic neutrality should be prioritised over the human responsibility to think for ourselves and relieve suffering is a lie; it’s a lie promoted by people who have renounced their humanity in exchange for a corporate salary.

Do Murdoch’s moves towards subscription-only news services worry you? Will news become more exclusive?

It seems to go against the whole trend of internet-based communication; namely, that it’s about sharing everything for free and being rewarded indirectly for sharing – through donations, for example. The Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger commented recently:

“Our web traffic last month averaged just over two million unique browsers a day. One independent company which measured the Times’s UK web audience during September found that their web traffic – not including iPad apps – had fallen by 98% as people progressed past the paywall. More sophisticated analysts than me calculate that the content behind the paywall is therefore generating a total global audience of about 54,000 a month, of whom about 28,000 are paying for the digital content (the remainder being print subscribers).” [1] www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/nov/19/open-collaborative-future-journalism.

This suggests The Times is doing really badly. The best response is to give everything for free, which has always been, and always will be, our approach.

What are the most important overlooked news stories in 2011?

The long, despicably cynical history of the US-UK arming and support of dictators in North Africa and the Middle East. The greed-driven history and greed-driven current foreign policy could hardly be more obvious. But the media response is: ‘If they say they’re attacking Libya to protect civilians, then it must be so.’

Also, climate change. The continued foot-to-the-floor acceleration in exactly the wrong direction to satisfy short-term corporate profits while the same corporations flood climate sceptics with funds to prevent action being taken, a level of criminality and irresponsibility that is almost beyond comprehension.

Tell us about your plans for video alerts.

We’ve put them on the back-burner. It quickly became clear that we haven’t got time to do them ourselves and, despite very generous offers of help from a number of talented people, it also became clear that we wouldn’t have time to supervise other people doing them. It’s something we will return to as and when we have the resources.

Is your forum an important part of what Media Lens is trying to achieve?

We have two separate sites: the Media Lens message board and the forum. The forum is mostly for archiving useful material and for long-term discussions. The message board has become a very important resource. We’ve had a lot of problems with it over the years, but we’ve now got a group of very smart and committed regular posters sharing excellent material, sources and commentary.

Looking at the difference in media coverage between the invasion of Iraq and current intervention in Libya, do you think the rhetoric of war reporting has changed since 2003?

Journalists appear not to think so. There has been an epidemic of reporters mistakenly referring to ‘Iraq’ and ‘Saddam Hussein’ rather than ‘Libya’ and ‘Qaddafi’. It really is Permanent War – the same war being fought over and over again with the same Incarnation of Evil, the same Just Cause, and the same need for military action with all peaceful alternatives somehow completely unachievable.

Sometimes you can work things out just from knowing the basic facts. Qaddafi has been in power since 1969. He’s a ruthless cynic and survivor. He has done numerous deals with the greedy predators of the West. He knows what they want, knows what he needs to do to placate them. Even four years ago, Blair was able to do a ‘deal in the desert’ with him. But suddenly, after four decades, no deal is possible. Why? Almost certainly because a deal isn’t being sought by the West. As in Iraq, peace is the threat, not the goal. The goal is regime change.

Why? Secret diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks provide some clues. The following cable was sent from the US embassy in Tripoli to the State Department in August 2008:

“Libya’s economy is almost entirely dependent on oil and gas. Libya has the largest proven oil reserves (43.6 billion barrels) and the third largest proven natural gas reserves (1.5 billion cubic meters) on the African continent. Libya currently produces about 1.7 million barrels/day of oil; only Angola and Nigeria produce more in Africa...

“... Major US energy companies active in Libya include Amerada Hess, ConocoPhillips, Marathon, Chevron, ExxonMobil and Occidental. Joint ventures involving US companies currently account for about 510,000 barrels/day of Libya’s 1.7 million barrels/day production. A large number of small to mid-sized US oil and gas services companies are also working in Libya.”

A cable sent from the US embassy in Tripoli in November 2007 communicated US concerns about the direction being taken by Libya’s leadership:

“Libya needs to exploit its hydrocarbon resources to provide for its rapidly-growing, relatively young population. To do so, it requires extensive foreign investment and participation by credible international oil companies. Reformist elements in the Libyan government and the small but growing private sector recognize this reality. But those who dominate Libya’s political and economic leadership are pursuing increasingly nationalistic policies in the energy sector that could jeopardize efficient exploitation of Libya’s extensive oil and gas reserves. Effective US engagement on this issue should take the form of demonstrating the clear downsides to the government of Libya of pursuing this approach, particularly with respect to attracting participation by credible international oil companies in the oil/gas sector and foreign direct investment.”

Anyone who has studied the history of the region knows that “nationalistic policies in the energy sector” are what US cruise missiles feed on.

Will there always be a tabloid media?

Why not? Tittle-tattle has its place. The real question is: will there ever be a quality mass media?

medialens.org
democracynow.org
zcommunications.org
therealnews.com
fair.org

TABLOID WATCH.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE RED TOPS.

On 31st March 2011, the Daily Express front page headline claimed ‘Salt Banned in Chip Shops’. The truth was rather more mundane - a scheme called ASK had been set-up in Stockport to put salt behind the counter of food outlets so customers would have to ask if they wanted it. Five places had voluntarily signed up. Nothing was ‘banned’. No-one was ‘forced’ to do anything. There were no ‘diktats’ enforced by ‘health police’. Never mind events in Libya, Japan or the Ivory Coast – the most important news for the Express that day was about a ban on salt that wasn’t a ban at all. And it seems clear the headline and framing of the story was no accident. This was a deliberate attempt to mislead.

Tabloid Watch, my blog about bad journalism, covered the Express’ story as soon as it appeared on their website on Wednesday night. By the time the paper hit shelves the following day, my blog post proving it wasn’t true was available to anyone searching the internet for more info about this ‘ban’.

I started writing Tabloid Watch just over two years ago. I was increasingly frustrated that poor journalism was going unquestioned and unpunished. Day after day I could see stories in the press, particularly the tabloid press, that were highly problematic or extremely partial, if not completely untrue, and often twisted to fit a particular agenda. And it seemed as if nothing was being done – or could be done – about it.

The ‘salt banned’ story is at the more frivolous end, but fits into the genre of political correctness gone mad/health and safety tales that are rarely as clear cut as the papers make out. But when the targets are minority groups, it’s a more serious problem. On 19th September 2010, the same publication ran a front page headline announcing ‘Muslim Plot To Kill Pope’. Six men had indeed been arrested but most of the media coverage was very muted. Not from the Express, which proclaimed ‘Islamic terrorists disguised as street cleaners allegedly hatched an audacious plot to blow up the Pope.’ Note the language – they were already ‘Islamic terrorists’ but were only ‘allegedly’ involved in this plot. Two days later, in one sentence buried at the end of another article on page nine, the paper made clear the men had all been released without charge. There was, of course, no apology for labelling them terrorists plotting to kill the Pope a few days before. It was as far removed from the front page screamer as possible.

Muslims, like immigrants and Gypsies, are on the receiving end of an incredible amount of negative media coverage. Certain tabloids fill their pages with exaggerated, inflammatory and often incorrect stories attacking minorities, which in turn seep into the public consciousness. They get repeated on other websites, especially websites of the far right, and become accepted as true.

Nonsensical claims about illegal immigrants getting free cars (Carole Malone, News of the World) or being saved from deportation for having a cat get repeated as fact in readers’ letters and newspaper website comments, long after the original article appears. It was notable that when journalist Rich Peppiatt resigned from the Daily Star, the points he made about the Star’s made-up celebrity stories and anti-Muslim agenda were arguments blogs such as mine have been making for years.

So who holds the media to account? It should be the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), but this pitiful regulator has proved time and time again that it is completely unable and unwilling to do it. The Editor’s Code of Practice is actually fairly comprehensive, but the PCC fails to uphold it in letter or spirit.

Earlier this year, the owners of the Daily and Sunday versions of the Express and Star stopped paying the fee that helps fund the PCC and which shows a news organisation is signed up to the system of self-regulation. Four of the worst offending newspapers simply opted out of the regulatory system and the PCC was powerless to do anything about it.

Not that the PCC does much to newspapers within its remit anyway. One problem is that its powers to punish newspapers are so feeble. Editors will come up with all manner of excuses against fines, but if Ofcom can impose them on broadcasters that break the rules - the BBC was fined £150,000 over ‘Sachsgate’ and ITV paid £5.675m for running misleading phone-in competitions - why is it inappropriate for the newspapers?

The PCC and most newspaper editors will say that a negative adjudication from the PCC is penalty enough. In reality, it means very little.

In September 2010, the PCC ruled against the Star’s ‘Muslim-Only Public Loos’ story on the basis that they weren’t Muslim-only and they weren’t publicly-funded. It expressed concern about the Star’s ‘lack of care’ in the presentation of the story. Yet a few weeks later, a Star front page carried two headlines that were blatantly untrue. ‘Cowell: My feud with Cheryl’ included the quote “No. Cheryl and I haven’t had a fight, yet!” while the story under ‘Love-rift Kara quits Strictly’ provided no evidence she’d done any such thing and, indeed, Ms Tointon went on to win the show. Clearly, the PCC’s adjudication had no effect on the Star’s behaviour at all.

When the Sunday Express in Scotland published an appalling front page story that intruded into the lives of the teenagers who had survived the Dunblane massacre, the PCC ruled: ‘Although the editor had taken steps to resolve the complaint, and rightly published an apology, the breach of the Code was so serious that no apology could remedy it.’ What did the PCC make the paper do? Publish the PCC’s lengthy adjudication against it, four months after the event. Does the PCC really think that remedies it?

In May 2010 a poll published by Ofcom showed only 34% of people said they trusted what they read in newspapers, compared with 66% who trusted radio news and 54% TV news. A YouGov poll from September 2010 revealed only 41% of respondents had ‘total trust’ in up-market newspapers, 21% in mid-market papers and only 10% in the tabloids. 83% had little or no trust in the red-tops. Of the 25 professions listed, tabloid journalists came last behind estate agents and, amusingly, EU officials.

Perhaps if there was an effective regulator holding them to account, making them correct and apologise for untrue stories and fining them for serious breaches of the Code, then levels of trust would not be so low.

There are few outlets for criticising and debunking stories. Media Monkey and Roy Greenslade do it occasionally for MediaGuardian, and Private Eye’s Street of Shame highlights hypocrisy and poor practice but being a fortnightly publication it has issues of topicality.

Does my blog and others like it make any difference? Probably not. Compared to the readership of the newspapers I write about, my readership is small (around 1,500-2,000 visits per day). It’s a one-person, part-time effort (although could easily be a full-time one) and I am under no illusion that hardcore Mail readers are going to read my blog and change their mind, if they even read my blog at all. I don’t doubt that there is an element of preaching to the converted – that my blog’s readers and my 7,200 followers on Twitter are sympathetic to my views – but at least it means that an alternative view is out there.

And in doing a job that neither the PCC or other media seem keen to do, blogs such as Tabloid Watch, Angry Mob, Enemies of Reason and Minority Thought are definitely needed.

tabloid-watch.blogspot.com

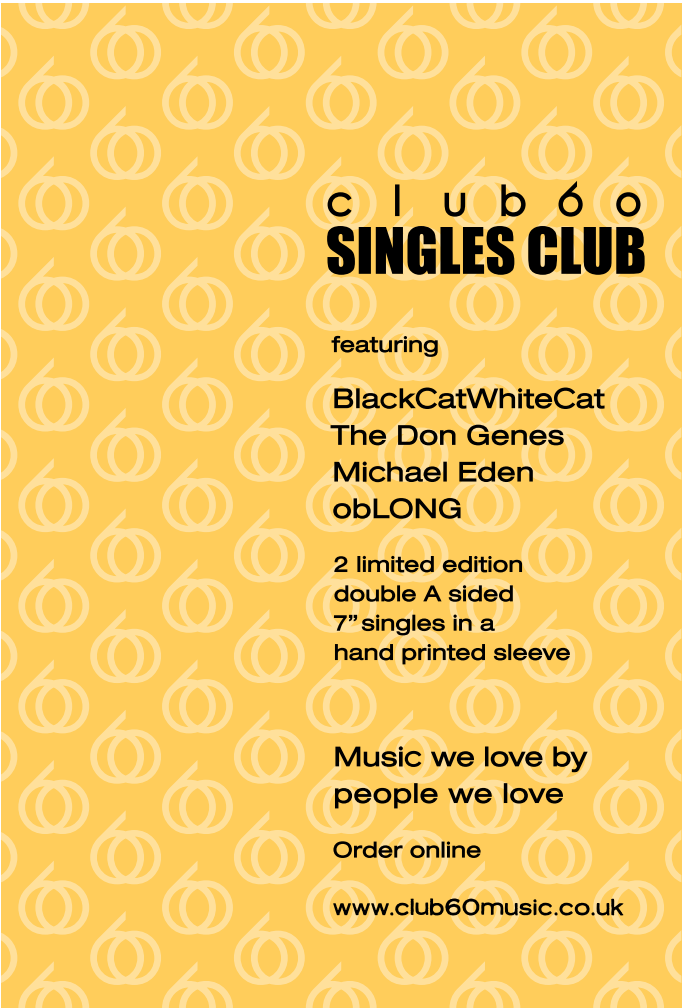


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definition

pie/pi/Noun

A baked food composed of a pastry shell filled with fruit, meat, cheese, cream, custard, jelly filling or other ingredients and usually having a pastry lid.



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THE VENNS.

PUB QUIZZES EXPLAINED.

QUINT’S AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY OF PUB QUIZZES.

I first breezed through Sheffield from New York on a pen pal visit in 1992, and took two photographs - one of the cooling towers and another of the hole in the road. I returned in 1997 and have slowly been developing the fear that all the things I’ve subsequently photographed here will be razed to the ground by the council as well. If you see me with a camera, you’d be wise to duck.

On my second visit, I became aware of the pub quiz phenomenon, and was so taken with the concept that I put my own embarrassingly narcissistic spin on it by having one read out as part of my birthday party, not in a pub but in a coffee shop, and all twenty questions were about me. Did I mention I was American?

When I came to stay for good in 1999, I finally had the opportunity to assimilate properly, became more self-effacing and began drinking correctly. I also found that writing essays was far less rewarding than proving I knew that the name of the pink-haired woman on Are You Being Served was Mrs. Slocombe, and I developed a penchant for the virtually instantaneous gratification of placing tick marks next to correct answers thirty minutes and a pint after being asked the questions.

Eleven years, one-and-a-half post-graduate degrees and over a decade of British pop cultural knowledge later, I’m still at it. Now that I am - to all outward appearances - sensible (married, mortgaged and gainfully employed), getting a team together at the last minute through a series of cloak-and-dagger texts and hand signals gives me a nearly forgotten thrill of youthful schemes and escapades. Pulling a right answer from the depths of some primal race memory is as enjoyable as shocking my teammates with my knowledge of UK pop culture references. I didn’t even know it was happening while I ate takeaway to post-clubbing 4am broadcasts of Rainbow and I Love the 80s, or annotating Shakespeare with UK GOLD on in the background, but having enough trivia knowledge to win the whole shebang wipes out days of trivial annoyances.

So if you haven’t yet, find a pub and try it for yourself. Just make sure it’s not one I’ve taken a photo of.

JOW’S VIEW FROM A YORKSHIREMAN.

It couldn’t be any simpler. I love being told I’m right. The feeling I get when I hear the words “You make a good point” or “How did you know that?!” must be comparable only to the feeling Lewis Hamilton gets when he overtakes on a hairpin bend and doesn’t die, or the feeling Clinton Morrison gets when he doesn’t balls up a five-yard tap in, for once.

I was once asked by a visiting German friend to explain the reason for sitting through a quiz. He wondered why anyone would go to the pub to have questions shouted at them as a form of relaxation.

The explanation I proffered was that in life, and particularly in Yorkshire, you don’t get told you’re right very often. If you make a mess of something, people have no problem calling you an idiot. But if you’re right about something, you’re taught that there’s no need to show off. No need to brag. You’re no better than anyone else. Same goes for losing. Chin up. Move on. Don’t cry.

This is a tough way to live for someone who feeds on praise like a unicorn feeds on the hearts of freshly slaughtered Care Bears. But that’s not the pub quiz way, and therein lies its beauty. When a correct answer is scribed, judged and a large tick is scratched on the page, particularly to a quite obscure question, understated but enthusiastic cheers can be heard across the pub, all the way to the dart board. Conversely, when a group (or a bevvvy, to use the correct collective noun) of players happens to jot down the wrong answer when they are certain it’s right, let the arguing commence. Do not take it lying down.

It’s not about winning (although that’s always nice). Winning is just the end result of being told you are right more times than anyone else in the pub.

Oh, and you get to drink beer at the same time.

The Venns is a zine, comedy show (coming soon) and research project about finding the perfect pub quiz. We’ll let you know when we’ve found it.

The Venns will be performing at The Riverside’s Shoebox Theatre as part of the Shoebox Experiment on May 4th with their comedy performance lecture. There will be stats and diagrams. And cake.

nowandvenn@gmail.com
[@thevenns](https://www.facebook.com/thevenns)

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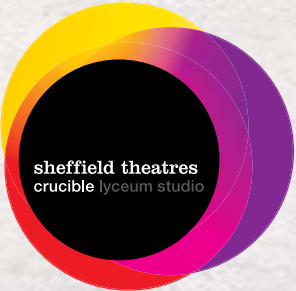


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Due to there being an unprecedented twelve coffee cups needing to be cleaned in the sink at work, it is understandable that Shannon would be outraged by this intrusion on her Facebook and looking out the window time.

Though kitchen duties may be an expected part of her job role, there is no reason why everyone should not reschedule work/client commitments and help out to ensure Shannon's social networking and looking out the window time is not interrupted.

From: Shannon
To: Staff
Subject: Coffee cups

Hi

There was twelve coffee cups left in the sink this morning. Could everyone please wash their coffee cups after using them.

Thanks, Shan

From: David Thorne
To: Shannon
Subject: Re: Coffee cups

Morning Shannon,

My apologies. Those coffee cups were mine. I am rather busy today so decided to have all of my coffee breaks at the one time this morning rather than taking twelve separate breaks throughout the day. I am currently experiencing severe heart palpitations but also typing at four hundred and seventy words per minute so should be able to knock off early.

Regards, David.

From: Shannon
To: David Thorne
Subject: Re: Re: Coffee cups

I was not saying they were all your coffee cups I was just saying that I should not have to wash twelve coffee cups when I don't even drink coffee. People should wash their own coffee cups or at least take it in turns to wash them.

Shan

From: David Thorne
To: Shannon
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Coffee cups

Shannon,

You raise a valid and not at all uninteresting point. Perhaps you could construct some kind of chart. A roster system would enable us to work in an environment free of dirty coffee cups and put an end to any confusion regarding who the dirty coffee cup responsibility lies with.

David.

From: Shannon
To: Staff
Subject: Kitchen Roster

Hi everyone. I have discussed a kitchen roster with David and feel it would be fair if we took it in turns to do the dishes. I have put the roster in the kitchen so everyone can remember. I am Monday morning and Wednesday and Friday afternoon. David is Monday afternoon and Wednesday morning. Lillian is Tuesday morning and Thursday afternoon and Thomas is Tuesday afternoon and Friday morning.

Thanks, Shan

From: David Thorne
To: Shannon
Subject: Colour coded coffee cup cleaning chart

Shannon, I notice that you have colour coded the coffee cup cleaning chart. While I appreciate the creative effort that has gone into this roster, the light salmon colour you have chosen for my name is very effeminate. While I am sure you have not done this on purpose and are not inferring anything, I would appreciate you rectifying this immediately. Would it be possible to swap colours with Thomas as he has quite a nice dusty blue.

Thankyou, David

From: Shannon
To: Staff
Subject: Updated kitchen roster

Hi. I have changed David's colour to blue on the kitchen roster. Thomas is now green.

Shan

27B/6.

ONE GIRL TWELVE CUPS.
27BSLASH6.COM

From: Thomas
To: David Thorne
Subject: What the fuck?

What the fuck is this email from Shannon? I am not doing a fucking kitchen roster. Was this your idea?

From: David Thorne
To: Thomas
Cc: Shannon
Subject: Re: What the fuck?

Thomas, do you feel it is fair that Shannon should have to wash everyone's coffee cups? Apparently this morning there were twelve coffee cups in the sink. I was going to schedule a staff board meeting this afternoon to discuss the issue but luckily Shannon has prepared a colour coded coffee cup cleaning chart for us rendering a staff meeting unnecessary.

We should all thank Shannon for taking the initiative and creating a system that will empower us to efficiently schedule client meetings and work commitments around our designated coffee cup cleaning duties. If at any stage our rostered coffee cup cleaning commitments coincide with work requirements, we can simply hold the client meeting in the kitchen. We can wash while the clients dry. Today it may only be twelve coffee cups but tomorrow it could be several plates and a spoon and then where would we be?

David.

From: Thomas
To: Shannon
Subject: Kitchen stuff

Shannon, I do not need a chart telling me when to wash dishes. I am not going to stop in the middle of writing proposals to wash coffee cups. David is being a fuckwit. I only use one coffee cup and I always rinse it out after I use it. If we have clients here and they use coffee cups then it is appreciated that you wash them as part of your job.

From: Lillian
To: Thomas
Subject: Re: Kitchen stuff

What's this kitchen roster thing? Did you agree to this?

From: David Thorne
To: Shannon
Subject: Rescheduling coffee cup duties

Shannon, can I swap my rostered coffee cup cleaning duty this afternoon for Thursday? I have been busy all day working, not looking at pictures of Johnny Depp on the internet, and not had time to familiarise myself with correct coffee cup cleaning requirements. I am happy to reschedule my meetings tomorrow to undertake a training session on dish washing detergent location and washcloth procedures with you if you have the time. I feel it would be quite helpful if prior to the training session you prepared some kind of Powerpoint presentation. Possibly with graphs. Will I need to bring my own rubber gloves or will these be provided?

David

From: Shannon
To: David Thorne
Subject: Re: Rescheduling coffee cup duties

Whatever.



27bslash6.com

SCOTIA WORKS.

CHARITIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANISATIONS.

DAVE BERRY.

The name ‘works’ is synonymous with Sheffield’s past.

The city’s works were home to cutlers and other ‘little mesters’ that formed its wealth and character over the first two hundred years of the Industrial Revolution. They were also part of the “dark satanic mills” from the pen of Milton and the lines of ‘Jerusalem’ that presented a far grimmer reality to the workers of Sheffield. But today the name has been re-appropriated as a symbol of the changes the city has seen, and former works now house new industries and services. Many have been refurbished or replaced with newer buildings bearing their original name - Persistence Works and Butcher Works spring to mind.

Nestled beside another local landmark, the Leadmill nightclub, and close to Sheffield station, Scotia Works is a former cutlery works refurbished in 2002 and now used for a rather different type of work. Scotia is a base for a community of social change organisations dedicated to trying to improve society, gaining strength in numbers.

The site is owned and managed by the Ethical Property Company, a triple bottom line firm operating 16 similar centres across the UK and Europe. The aim is to provide offices and meeting space for groups not catered for by the traditional property market that are subject to variations in funding and income. The centre also offers the opportunity for organisations to share services and provides a platform for co-operation on funding and service delivery. The groups vary in structure - from co-operatives promoting cycling through to charities working with refugees, education and mediation - but all benefit from the community atmosphere of Scotia Works.

The aim of Scotia has been to provide voluntary sector groups with affordable, high-quality office space with flexible and stable leases. The refurbishment has produced a lovely building with a central glass atrium providing a communal courtyard, but it’s the people located there that provide its real heart. These are difficult times for the sector and many groups are suffering reductions in funding, but the opportunity for them to work together helps everyone.

PEDAL READY.

0114 241 2775.
pedalready.co.uk

Pedal Ready is a Sheffield-based not-for-profit co-op that provides cycling services in South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. We deliver Bikeability schools cycle training, adult learn to ride courses, individual urban coaching sessions, Cycle for Health courses, Doctor Bike (safety check) sessions, cycle rides, promotions and more. Many of our sessions are free at the point of delivery, but we also offer bespoke cycling activities on request. Pedal Ready is also a cycling Instructor Training Organisation and can train new National Standard cycling instructors.

Although our trainers are out and about, our office is located in Scotia Works. Being a small organisation, the inclusive services within Scotia building are a real benefit, and the social change community we are part of creates a supportive atmosphere and opportunities to share best practice, get a bit of advice or just a change of company while you have your lunch in the lovely atrium.

CDX.

0114 241 2760.
cdx.org.uk

Community Development Exchange (CDX) is a national charity that champions community development as a way to identify and help meet the needs of economically and socially disadvantaged communities, enabling them to participate more fully in society. We have over 1,000 members and are determined to influence Government thinking about how to support grassroots communities. While we welcome any talk of community empowerment, we challenge that notion that it can be achieved without experienced support and nurturing. Like many other charities, we have been struggling to survive Government cuts and are currently seeking other sources of income. Our struggles are mirrored by the even greater difficulties faced by frontline workers and grassroots community groups.

CRESST.

0114 241 2745
cresst.org.uk

CRESST is a small charity dedicated to helping people learn conflict resolution skills. It promotes alternatives to aggression and violence, working mainly but not exclusively in school communities and youth groups. CRESST aims to help those working with young people to develop attitudes, concepts and skills to enable them to manage conflicts constructively. We work with schools and other institutions to develop an ethos of respect and reduce incidences of unacceptable behaviour like bullying, as well as providing training in mediation for young people and adults working with young people.

Conflict resolution education helps to create tolerance and respect. It is not about conflict avoidance, but is about giving people the tools and the confidence to deal with issues effectively, reducing stress and building positive relationships.

NRC.

0114 241 2780.
nrcentre.org.uk

Northern Refugee Centre (NRC) is an independent registered charity that exists to support refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable new migrants within Yorkshire and the Humber. NRC provides an employment and education service in Sheffield, a community development service regionally and an advice & support service for refugees and asylum seekers in Sheffield and South Yorkshire.

We support campaigns and lobby the Government to promote the rights and welfare of refugees, asylum seekers and other new migrants in this country. NRC has a history of running successful mentoring and befriending projects for refugees and asylum seekers, and we are keen to provide these again soon.

We also run a project called Jantela Partnerships, which supports other refugee charities in Yorkshire & the Humber with issues such as fundraising and governance.

REMEDI.

remediuk.org

Remedi is a charity that has successfully grown from the early days of restorative justice and crime reduction. Its success has seen it grow from its original area of South Yorkshire to work with partners in the Midlands and the North. Collaborating with professionals from Youth Offending Teams and the Probation Service, as well as the victims of crime and offenders, Remedi is in the frontline of offering restorative justice packages.

Alongside these services, Remedi training packages from Scotia Works offer a range of mediation and mentoring skills around a whole range of anti-social and criminal behaviour, including youth advocacy, domestic violence and victim support. It is also active in forming Safer Schools Partnerships and has recently been contracted to provide restorative justice training to police in the area.

MESH.

enquiries@meshccs.org.uk

Mediation Sheffield (MESH) is a registered charity and has provided mediation services for the past 21 years. We work across South Yorkshire providing neighbour mediation, usually through contracts with registered social landlords. Over the past five years we have developed a community mediation service that responds to tensions in communities by working with frontline workers and activists. Our aim is to work strategically, identifying underlying causes and providing training in communication and mediation skills.

MESH works with young people and families. For example, through Home Office funding we have given focused training to young people at risk of being drawn into gang violence and have worked with them and their families to build more positive relationships. MESH also provides workplace mediation, between individuals and organisations in dispute.

SAVTE.

0114 2412765.
savte.org.uk

Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of English (SAVTE) recruits and trains volunteers to teach English as an additional language to members of the black and minority ethnic, refugee and EU communities. Our learners are some of the most excluded and isolated people in the city due to their inability to understand and communicate in English. Our aim is to reduce their isolation by providing life-changing language skills that allow them to engage with everyday life in new ways.

Our tutors train volunteers to teach ESOL on a National Open College Network accredited course, focusing on full time carers, people with disabilities, individuals who have no experience of formal education, parents with young children and those who lack confidence and self-esteem. Teaching takes place at the home of the learner on a one-to-one basis over nine weeks. SAVTE also develops and supports local learning groups and conversation clubs. Learners are referred to SAVTE through local health, social and educational workers.

DECSY.

0114 241 2750.
decsy.org.uk

Cast your eyes around Sheffield. Have you ever wondered how it came to become a big multicultural steel city? To get a full answer you need to look further afield, to South Yorkshire’s stately homes of Wentworth and Cannon Hall and then even further to their connections with India and the Caribbean - connections of slavery and colonialism. ‘We are here because you were there’ is an expression that comes to mind.

Helping children and young people make sense of the world is what the Development Education Centre (South Yorks) is all about. Through teacher professional development, projects and resources, we aim to equip the next generation with the critical enquiry skills to help them better understand the world and, through informed action, to help make it a more just and sustainable place in the future.







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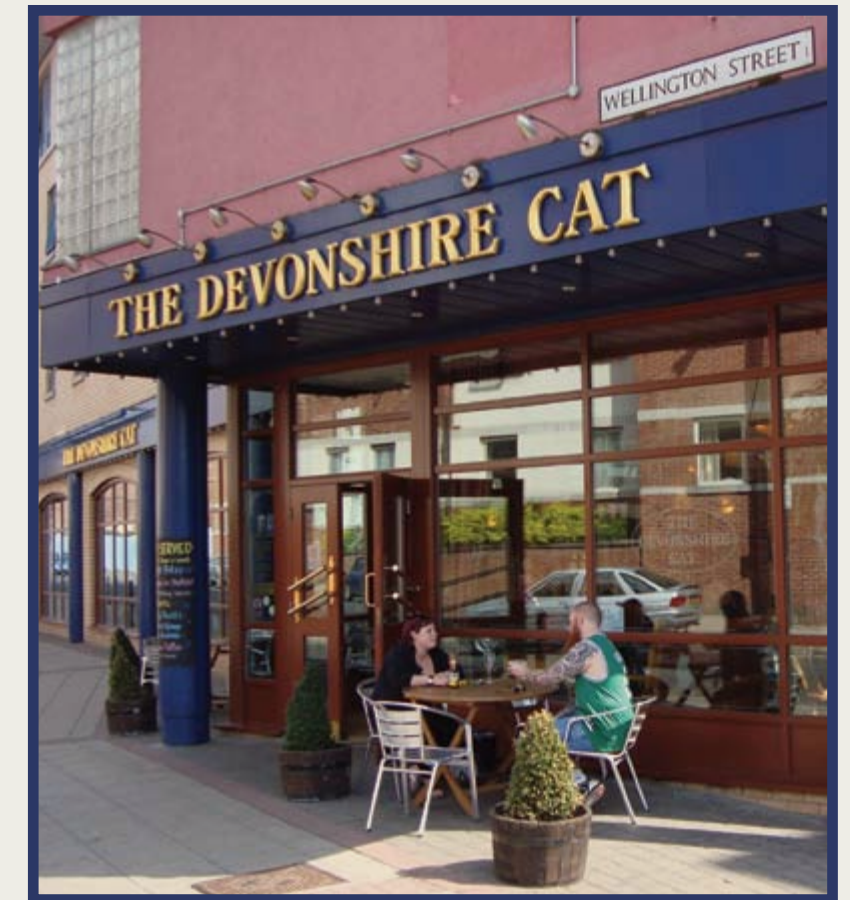


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WORDLIFE.

DEAN LILLEYMAN. SAM PRIESTLEY.

COLLATED BY JOE KRISS.

MY HALF-BROTHER STOLE A CAR.

drove it drunk to pitsmoor, missed a bend and bent a lamp-post, ran to my half-sister's bleeding and never got pinched.

my father calls him little bugger, puts a triangle of pints down on the table, goes back to the bar.

my half-sister shakes her head. smiles. says tell him the rest of it, ste, tell him why you stole it.

my half-brother drinks. grins. says it belonged to that twat. moved in a week after she'd chucked me out. so i wrote his mondeo off ... ha.

my half-sister tuts: that's not all of it she says: tell him, tell him what you did before that.

my father puts two bottles of grolsch in front of me says got you two cos we're on pints yeah?

go on, my half-sister says: tell him the rest of it. tell him what you did to the house.

my half-brother grins. lights a fag. says she deserved it ... the slag ... then tells me this:

i went round to see her. to see her and my kid and sort things out. but they weren't in so i went for a beer. waited. and later when i tried again still no-one answered. so i went round the back. got in by the dicky kitchen window to leave a note. and when i got in some twat's workboots were by the backdoor. car keys by the stereo. trousers on the fuckarse clotheshorse. so i took a shit on her bed. used it to write bitch on the wall. pissed in her knicker drawer. took a bread-knife to her clothes. went to the kid's room turned the cot upside down. pulled the arms off a teddy. stamped on a doll's house. all of which i'd paid for in the first fuckin place.

and my father laughs. says little bugger. drinks. my half-sister shaking her head saying:

oh steeee. you and your temper.

DEAN LILLEYMAN.

HIT AND RUN.

The Spanish sun, harsh and fierce like a blowtorch, is gone from the sky now. Rhea looks up and sees too many stars to count. Black warmth. She's alone again.

The slow hover of lights from a passing aeroplane flick in the darkness. She watches it move between the stars. The only sound is the scrape of chairs and clatter of cutlery in the restaurants behind her, and the sea in front.

Her hand is still warm where Stephen held it when they left the restaurant just now, only five minutes ago, whispering a joke about doing a runner without paying as they nudged past the checked tablecloths. He was feeling better tonight. The diareze had kicked in big time, and he'd gone completely the other way. Rhea had done her best to ignore him. She didn't have a clue how to react to being faced with his intimate bodily functions. And she was fine. An iron constitution, Stephen said.

*

The roads here in Malaga are different. Everywhere is black now. Across the street a row of bars have lights. There's a strobe from the hillside above where a nightclub wakes and breathes fire into the air, but down here there's just the sound of the sea. They had to get to it. It makes your eyes work harder. You need to see the waves. In some ways, you need to know the water isn't too close, that there's still sand, that the surf won't hit you if you stand beside the noise.

Stephen left the money on the checked tablecloth at the restaurant as they were leaving, a tip too. Funny, Rhea wouldn't have had him down as the kind of guy who left tips unless he had to, but he'd freed a sprawl of change onto the plastic table covering like he was letting a bird go.

She'd smiled at him. Maybe he wasn't so bad after all. And he took her hand in return for the smile.

*

The other noises start now. Rhea is standing halfway across the road. To her left traffic lights blink, a vertebrae of cars flexing like the pull of reins on a horse's head. She hears a scream. Knows it's her own voice. The thump of a car hitting a body and the skid of tires, the shriek of breaks and roar of revs all mixed together. Which came first, the scream or the hit?

She can still hear the waves loud out in the ocean and knows she's walked forward to the other side of the road where the wall and rocks shelter the sea, but someone is talking close now, trying to block out the sound of water that's like wind.

'You'll be ok.' someone's saying. 'I'm a nurse.'

She's English, and the sound of her voice is ludicrously comforting. But Rhea still feels like she's lying. Stephen isn't going to be ok, is he?

The nurse turns around from where she's crouching and gives Rhea a look. Stephen's asking if he's going to lose his legs because one is bending the wrong way. There's blood, and Rhea can see clean bone sticking out of the leg that's sickeningly bent, like a chicken wing pulled from a carcass. Crack. Like a party popper.

'What happened?' someone says.

Rhea is just staring at Stephen.

The ambulance is here.

*

Stephen left bits of money like food scraps on the checked tablecloth at the restaurant twenty minutes ago. He paid up front at the bar when he got their drinks. No, he wasn't drunk. She doesn't think so.

The policeman is staring at Rhea while she speaks, his tiny office, no bigger than a cloakroom, smells of an old un-aired school. And fear.

He spells the words out in the air. Pigeon English although he can speak it perfectly well. 'HIT. AND. RUN. So many on that road.' He holds his palms up in the air in a gesture of helplessness. 'Everyday.' he says. 'More and more accidents. More and more people like you in my office who don't even know the boy's birthday.'

So she's been caught out, but the policeman doesn't seem to care. He sighs, looking down at the form again. 'My advice?' he says. 'Go home. Forget all about it. We won't catch the man who did this. We never do. Stolen car. Stolen passport. My guess, stolen life. Go to your friend in the hospital and tell him the truth.'

*

She stands in the room where Stephen lays in traction, his leg having been manipulated back into position, his bones growing to meet each other at the break. His body healing itself. She will leave him here. Hardly knows him. Can't administer medicine, fetch water, wipe his chin free of dribbles and wean him from the painkillers. She can't even touch him now.

'I'm sorry.' she says. 'Wish I could tell you how long it will take before you feel any better.'

Then Rhea turns away. The sound of Spanish radio in the next room. The smell of tomato sauce curling down the corridor. She forms more words in her head.

It was fun while it lasted. I'm not ready for anything heavy. You're a really nice guy.

But what she wants to tell him is that loneliness breeds loneliness and the pain never goes away. It just dulls to an untouchable ache.

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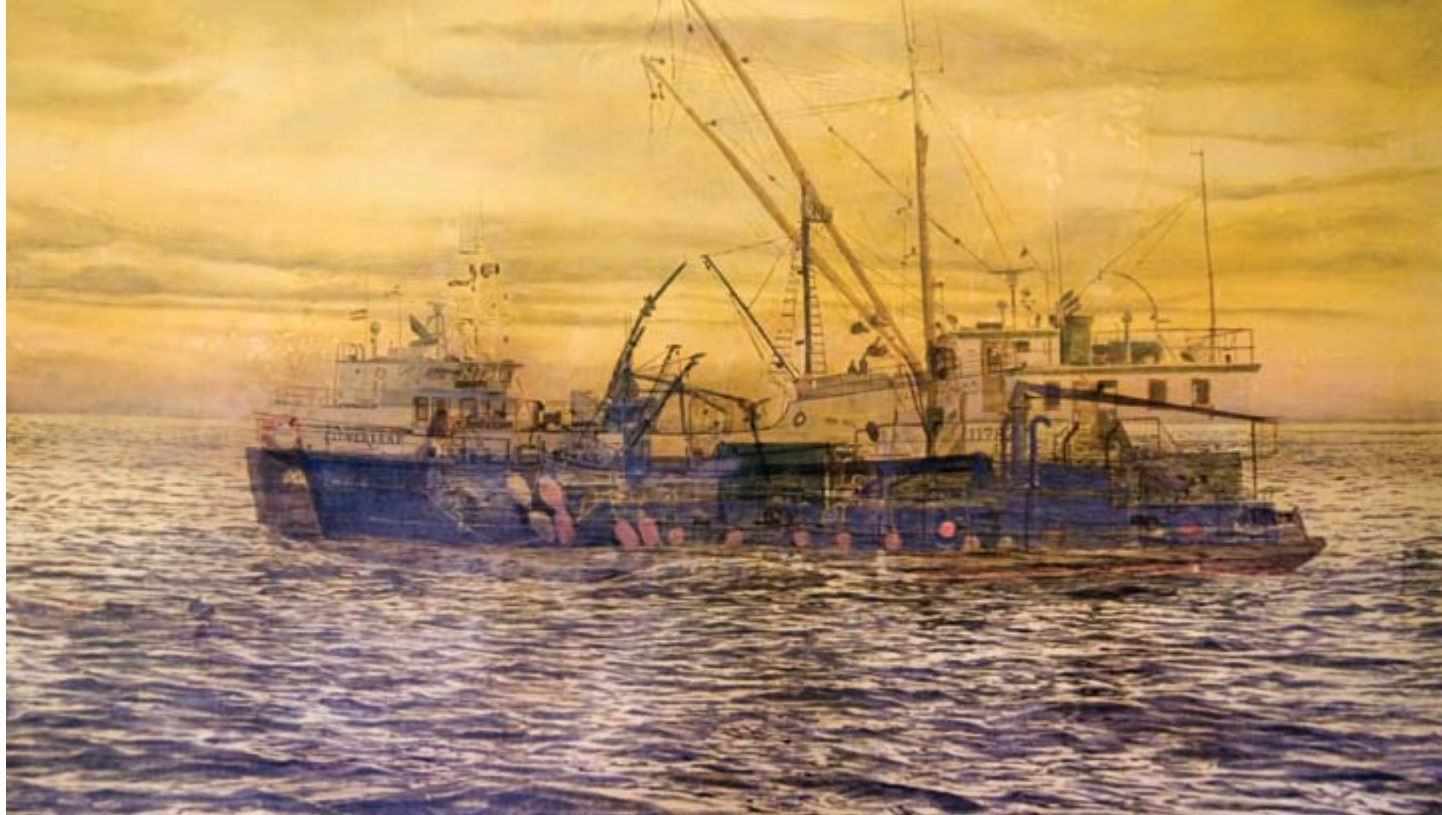
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MARTIN MACHADO.

PAINT WHAT YOU KNOW.

INTERVIEW BY JONES.

There is something slightly tragic about living in the most landlocked city in the UK and missing the sea daily, but that’s the life of a Scarborough exile. I know I’m not alone, because friends from Sheffield visit my neck of the woods more regularly than I do. So bear with me. This one is personal.

Machado splits his time between art and various jobs at sea, from cargo ships to crab fishing. The dedication and sole pursuit of something cohesive and real - as my dad (15 years in the Merchant Navy) would say ‘proper work’ - comes across in every image. Paint what you know.

Vague Turner-isms and a massively keen attention to detail make the complex, exhaustingly painted seas next to abstract skies, and the yawning hugeness of nature with the many ways human enterprise takes them out onto the water, jump out of the page. Stern stuff.

BASICS, PLEASE. WHAT STARTED YOU DRAWING?

I was lucky to have very encouraging parents - a cartoonist grandfather, a huge supportive family actually. Pretty dorky beginnings. I always had phases growing up, where I thought I was a Native American and only drew them, which then turned into a Robin Hood obsession for a while. I shot a hole in my wall with a homemade bow and arrow, when I was actually having a face-off with Kevin Costner on my poster of the 90s American movie version.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF STARTING A NEW PIECE?

It’s always random really. Recently I started about 20 pieces quickly and finally stopped on one to work for a while, but I like to bounce back and forth. I’ve also been working on more found stuff from some different jobs - nautical charts from a containership, driftwood, old fish packing boxes from an abandoned cannery in Alaska. I like that it gives me a starting point, rather than just a blank canvas.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

Mostly from work, travel, the people I meet, the land and the sea.

TOOLS. WHAT DO YOU USE REGULARLY AND WHAT’S YOUR FAVOURITE?

I use a lot of different paints, usually starting with waterbased like Gouache or Acrylic for traveling ease or working in confined quarters. Then I switch back to oils at some point because they’re the only paint I can sort of predict. I’ve worked with epoxy resin for a while, and stacking semi-translucent paintings on fiberglass cloth. I like the effects, like a physical technique of creating Photoshop layers, and the resulting finish like a surfboard or fancy sailboat. But I’ve been using less resin recently, because I’m trying to get away from the nasty chemicals as much as possible.

WHAT OTHER ARTISTIC MEDIA HAVE HAD AN EFFECT ON YOUR ART?

Photography and film definitely play a huge role in both my process and ideas. I capture most of my images while working at sea, when I can’t really break out the easel and paint, so the photos become my sketchbook for many paintings.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS?

When home in San Francisco, I do my best to stay in the studio as much as possible, but I try get out and enjoy the outdoors when I can - ride a bike, surf, row on the bay. I love this place.

WHICH OF YOUR RECENT PIECES HAVE YOU ENJOYED MAKING THE MOST?

A recent piece was the most agonizing but has now become the most fun towards the end - some fairly detailed water painting. I should have used a projector or grid but was either too stupid or too masochistic.

HOW HAS YOUR ART EVOLVED OVER TIME?

I hope that my images have become a little more developed. I definitely realized I had to work harder to be happy with them. I think I’m more comfortable now making a piece that may be seen as cheesy. I’ve always liked cheesy really, like the décor in an old harbor fish restaurant or in Christian illustration. To me it is more like research and collection. I’m just interested in seafaring culture in all aspects. My artwork and jobs have always just led from one thing to another, and I’ve never felt like I could make work about something I didn’t really know personally.

HOW HAS ART IN GENERAL CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED?

I think high art has finally started to realize how stale and isolating it can be. There definitely have been some outstanding painters and photographers getting noticed recently. It seems like it is finally ok to re-present the world around us, to tell stories about life instead of only inside the artist’s head.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

Some stuff that is more illustrative, showing places and people from my six months on the containership. They might find their way into a short documentary type video about the same topic.

ANY TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE MAKING MONEY FROM YOUR ART? DO YOU FIND IT IMPORTANT?

I can’t really say because I’ve always worked real jobs in chunks to be able to come home and work on art till the cash runs out. I like working outside of art for a while. It allows me some time away from the studio to reflect. I don’t think it’s vital for an artist to only make art. You definitely have to be disciplined to get back into the studio and make up for lost time, but I think it’s grounding to occasionally surround yourself with people who don’t give a shit about the art world.

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE IN ART?

Pretentious, preachy work, silly little puzzles set up for us to figure out, or anything that ignores the viewer or was only created to confuse.

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE IN ART?

Creative, original work that makes you think, “Hey, a person made that!”

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SOUND.

TALENT IN MUSIC.

SAM WALBY.



The other week I overheard a conversation that made me really angry. It went roughly as follows:

Man: “I’m just so bored at the minute. What I’ve always wanted to do is play music.”

Woman: “Well, why don’t you then?”

Man: [after a brief pause] “Three reasons, really: I’m not talented, I can’t play any instruments and I’m lazy.”

The final sentence, contrary to what this man says, does not contain three reasons, but one excuse. Allow me to explain why.

I always loved music, but I hated music lessons. At the age of 12 I was more or less forced to learn the clarinet at school. I wanted to learn the sax instead, but apparently there weren’t enough of those shiny gold beasts to go around, and they established quite quickly I wasn’t God’s gift to music. Every week I sat in a cramped practice room and the teacher would ask if I’d done my practice. Each week I would reply no, because I can’t read music. Most weeks she would send me outside. I’d go home and try to play, inevitably throwing the clarinet across the room in a huff and declaring it defective. In the final end of year performance I had to pretend I was playing along with some elaborate piece of music, much to the amusement of my parents.

For years afterwards I would tell people I wasn’t musically gifted. I didn’t have it in me. I didn’t have ‘talent’. But this all changed when I decided to dust myself off and get back on the horse. I got a bass guitar for Christmas when I was 16, and the following year I bought an acoustic guitar for a tenner. I taught myself both, aided by the internet and drunken singalongs with friends. I’ve never had a lesson on either instrument.

More and more these days, particularly in music journalism, ‘talent’ is seen as a miraculous and invisible attribute, a kind of abstract potential measurement usually applied to young bands and producers who have exceeded expectations. Although I admit that you need to start early if you want to be an acclaimed classical musician, the idea that you should avoid playing music because you are not ‘musically talented’ is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and the only victims are the lazy people who can’t be bothered to apply themselves. Imagine being thrust into a strange country at the age of 50. You don’t speak the language, and you quickly realise that you will not survive without it. It might take a bit longer – after all, adults are slower to absorb new information than young uns – but you will eventually learn it.

In his 2008 book **Outliers**, Canadian writer Malcolm Gladwell argues that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to become truly great at something. Basing his statements on research by Dr K Anders Ericsson, he contends that ‘genius’ is only truly achieved by doing 20 hours of practice a week for 10 years. He also factors in environmental variables like access to appropriate resources and good old-fashioned luck. Gladwell does not deny that some people can have a predisposal to any given task, but the main thrust of his observation is that environment and practice are by far the biggest defining features of all geniuses (or is it genii?).

What we call talent, as Gladwell argues, is more like a combination of hard work, determination and luck, not some “exceptional or mysterious” magic potion that inevitably takes you to the top. Songs don’t write themselves.

I would like to point out at this juncture that I do not think of myself as a ‘talented’ musician, but I am a musician nonetheless and have never been formally taught. So to anyone reading this who thinks they are not musically talented – you have not properly applied yourself. If it is really what you want, then immerse yourself in it and the rest will follow.

Oh and by the way, I still can’t read music, but I am under no illusions that this is due to anything other than my own laziness.

LIVE.

SOUP KITCHEN. CURRY IN THE SURREY.

JAH SHAKA SOUNDSYSTEM. WILEY.

SOUP KITCHEN & BIGGER THAN BARRY.

25TH MARCH.
M-CODE.

REVIEWER - BEN DOREY.

Big things occurred in the last week of March as a collaboration between Birmingham’s prolific Bigger Than Barry and Sheffield’s own Soup Kitchen brought a line-up of some of the hottest names in bass music to M-Code for a huge one-off event. As with previous Soup Kitchen parties, a hugely successful campaign of subtle yet well targeted promotion ensured the event sold out well in advance, and it must be said that it seems to be the Soup Kitchen crew who were really running things here in general.

When we arrived there was a huge but expected queue to get into M-Code, so unfortunately we missed the first acts, but arriving straight into Pariah’s opening track was one of the more pleasant clubbing experiences I’ve had in a while. Joining the dots between the cutting edge of several scenes - notably UK bass, Berlin techno and the deeper side of current Chicago/ Detroit trends - Pariah mixed seamlessly with a strong ear for progression that is woefully lacking in many of his contemporaries. A general 4/4 style definitely rooted his set in house more than anything else, but pleasing elements of garage and juke crept in to give an enjoyable swagger to proceedings. The highlight of my evening.

Next up was Joy Orbison, who as the current star of the bass scene was certainly the premier pulling point for the night. Orbison’s selection continued along the predominantly 4/4 trend set by Pariah, but with a tendency towards vocal house that I’m still a little uncomfortable with. Though I can appreciate that many current releases in the style are setting the bar higher than previous efforts in the genre in both musicality and production, there are only so many tepid vocal lines and samey synths I can take. As the set progressed Orbison did divert gradually away from this style, into the more broken and minimal rhythms characterised by his recent ‘Sicko Cell’ release. This could only be a good thing, and as the clattering polyrhythms and jumpy kicks clamored around me I almost forgot about my earlier dissatisfaction.

Taking over at 3am was Lil Silva, who provided a welcome change from the meditative sounds of the past couple of hours with a genre smashing set of party tunes, taking in everything from grime to mid-Nineties rave. Though many of the tracks weren’t to my taste, the skill Silva showed in working the room couldn’t help but impress, and the carefree sound of his set was the result of an undercurrent of precision at the controls. The same can be said of Jack Opus, who rounded off the night with a similar jaunt across genres - in all honesty a more pleasing one to my ears than Lil Silva’s - yet again affirming his position as one of Sheffield’s most versatile selectors.

Comment must be made on the extraordinary effort put into this party, and the largest part of this was the acquisition of a very impressive Martin sound system for the evening. This was the cleanest and most pleasing rig I have ever seen out in Sheffield. In combining a massive line-up with this sort of attention to detail, Soup Kitchen has yet again set itself apart from its rivals. The bar has been raised, and my money’s on these guys to do it again next time around.

CURRY IN THE SURREY.

9TH APRIL.
THE EARL.

REVIEWER – JACK UNSWORTH.

One of the most delicious musical events in the Sheffield calendar is this annual fundraiser for Peace in the Park. This year was no disappointment, as King Mojo brought us a three-course meal of music to accompany a curry made lovingly by Carla and the ‘Peace and Love Kitchen’ at The Earl of Arundel and Surrey. Between bands, DJs RP Renz (Frozac) and DJ Barney (Dubclub) supplied us with treats of global beats and dub respectively.

The first band on were the stunning Me and My Friends, a five-piece from Leeds playing an inspiring blend of laid-back jazz and folk. They sounded one moment Parisian, then Brazilian, then Gypsy, but still very much their own sound. Understated bass and percussion lines allowed for the clarinettist, cellist and guitarist/lead singer to create an overall sound that was incredibly full for only five people on acoustic instruments. The guitarist, classically trained, sounded like a modern day João Gilberto, but with a voice sweeter and so much more expressive. Meanwhile, the cellist and clarinettist played richly harmonised grooves and melodies and the overall effect was a band whose cheerful character came across in every song, and somehow this acoustic outfit had the whole place dancing. Powerful stuff indeed.

Tasked with the tough job of following them was Mental Block from Wakefield, who raised the energy levels with a blend of dub and ska, sweet vocals and brutally executed bluesy guitar solos, and general good fun. Their reggae switched from cheerful and tightly rehearsed to raucous and energetic and back again, a constantly transforming beatsy beast. The crowd loved them and we all had a good dance.

The headliners were local band Smiling Ivy, who somehow raised the stakes higher still, playing ska rock with heavy punk overtones and all the energy this deserves. The crowd transformed once more as the dancing hit a new frenzy of activity. With lyrics political and riffs bouncing, they clearly knew how to craft a great tune and make an atmosphere buzz.

And the food? Trying to describe it in writing suddenly reminded me of the adage about dancing about architecture, so along that vain of absurdism, I asked DJ RP Renz if he could describe how tasty the curry was with a single song. After a moment, he replied ‘Kirwani by Jolly Mukherjee’, which, having listened, I would agree with. Compliments to the chefs.

JAH SHAKA SOUND SYSTEM.

16TH APRIL.
@ CORPORATION.

REVIEWER – BARNEY HARRIS.

The last time Jah Shaka Sound System played in Sheffield was in the late 80s at a venue named Top Rank, which occupied the building now known as the O2 Academy. Lest we forget England was a very different place in those days; CD-ROMS had just been invented, stonewash jeans were all the rage and a call from a pay phone would cost you a mere two pence. How times change. But on the other hand, while mass demonstrations rocked some of our major cities a neo-liberal Tory government sought to cut benefits and cease wealth redistribution, dismantle and privatise national institutions and curb immigration. Oh, and there was a royal wedding. Sounding familiar yet?

So what’s the point in all these pseudo-social factoids and what on earth do they have to do with Jah Shaka and roots reggae music? Well, as any reggae fan worth their salt will tell you, the kind of music Jah Shaka Sound System plays is message music. Between the thumping basslines and spaced-out synths are inherently poignant social and spiritual teachings which, as the above trip down memory lane demonstrates, are as relevant today as they were 20 years ago. Shaka’s famous 1980 production ‘Babylon’, featuring the sweet vocals of Johnny Clarke, tore up the dance at Corporation, but at the same time reminded us to be strong and unite against Babylonian oppression - something around half a million of us managed in London in March of this year.

By not long after midnight the venue’s largest capacity room was ram-a-jam with smiling faces of many ages, races and backgrounds, grooving steadily to Shaka’s connoisseur selection of roots revival tunes. We’re used to hearing reggae music champion unity, respect and equality, but it’s much rarer to see these ideals acted out in front of our own eyes. As the session warmed in I certainly felt part of something epic and quite special, a rare event and not just another Saturday night out. As the night drew on, the crowd was captivated, entranced and at points alarmed by Shaka’s raw manipulation of original drum and bass music. Stripping back the dub rhythms to their constituent working parts, he masterfully engineered beats to satisfy even the most devout techno heads or bass junkies.

The beauty of a roots sound system crew like Jah Shaka’s is their ability to control the atmosphere of a session from start to finish. They provide the speakers, the DJs, the vocalists. It’s not like going to catch your favourite DJ play a set at a local bar. Roots reggae sound systems offer the full works and provide the crowd with a totally unique listening experience. The Guardian reckons Britain is more Thatcherite today than in the 1980s, so let’s hope music like this will continue to be an instrument and expression of change, both musically and socially. As long as promoters like Dubcentral continue to work hard, it will undoubtedly continue to be the case here in Sheffield.

WILEY.

7TH APRIL.
@ PLUG.

REVIEWER - SIMON WARD.

Before tonight I had never seen Wiley before, but I am a massive fan of his music and creativity as a recording artist. Granted, with Roll Deep in recent years he has touched upon sounds not to my liking, but his constant and seemingly never-ending stream of true-to-his-roots music released alongside more commercial efforts more than makes up for this. Tonight, however, did not do any part of his career justice.

Bad promotion and hugely overpriced tickets meant this gig had a crowd of less than 100 people. Bad sound engineering left the first act’s live PA sounding like a muffled irritation to a night surrounded by neon-wearing teenagers.

Fortunately – or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it – the sound had managed to morph itself into a projection in which you could actually hear the lyrics by the time Wiley took to the stage. I can completely understand Wiley’s lack of interest in performing at such a show. There was little to no atmosphere, the music was nowhere near loud enough and the dancefloor was bare for aforementioned reasons. But the vast majority of people had payed £15+ to attend this show and I don’t feel enough was done by the artist or the production team to justify this.

As always, Wiley was effortless with his lyrical ability, rarely missing even half a beat throughout his set. The very brief highlight was his performance of recent track ‘From The Drop’. Overall, though, he failed to generate enough energy with his performance. This fact was highlighted by the efforts of the two MCs joining him on stage to perform two recent Roll Deep Tracks. In between the 20 or so 90-second renditions of his tracks, the crowd were asked “If they were having a good time”, “If they were going on holiday this year” and “If they like the sunshine”...Desperate crowd warming measures in an increasingly embarrassing situation.

An artist like Wiley shouldn’t be represented in such a way. It’s hard to tell who or what was to blame for this forgettable occasion, but it was certainly a shame.



CHRISSY MURDERBOT.

WOMEN'S STUDIES.
PLANET MU.

REVIEWER – JACK SCOURFIELD.

If you haven't heard of 'juke' yet, you've clearly been living under a large rock deep in the Amazon Rainforest for the past year. Or at least, that's the kind of opening sentence you might find in a publication a lot snootier than Now Then.

In reality, you'd be readily excused for not having detailed knowledge of the Chicago sub-genre that's only fairly recently been lifted out of its natural habitat by Mike Paradinas and his Planet Mu label and given some exposure beyond the windy city, with releases from stalwart juke DJs Nate, Rocc and Rashad all causing medium-sized waves last year. Typing keywords such as 'juke', 'footwork' and 'dance' into the web will yield some genuinely jaw-dropping results, as dancers shuffle and flex their legs at an astonishing rate at Chicago juke parties, where the BPM typically hovers around the 160 mark.

The trouble is, once you take juke out of Chicago, you also take it out of context. I'm sure it'd be great fun to attend an inner-city juke jam, observing legs flying everywhere and probably spraining an ankle or two through attempts at mimicry. But step outside this party setting and juke can soon become your best bet if you're looking to inflict a headache upon yourself, fast. It's essentially a variant of hardcore dance – a bombardment of rapid beats usually accompanied by a fairly simplistic repetitive sample. Extensive listening can often become gratingly hard work. In recent times the likes of Addison Groove, Africa HiTech and Ramadanman have all run with the juke theme and moulded it into original productions within the UK realm, but now we get a taste of branching out from within the genre's heartland with the release of Chicago's own Chrissy Murderbot and his Planet Mu debut **Women's Studies**.

Women's Studies could well be the juke scene's most accessible release to date, partly because a lot of it isn't really juke. DJ Nate's **Da Trak Genius** and DJ Rocc's **The Crack Capone** may have been lauded highly in certain parts, but Chrissy Murderbot's full-length album is a lot more appealing than any of its Chicago predecessors. It shrugs off the idiosyncratic samples of many of his peers, and instead focuses on a more traditional song structure, but all the while weaving in juke undertones. Opener 'Break U Off' is a smooth R&B jam married in to the world of skittering 160bpm, while its successor 'New Juke Swing' is straight-up bastardised funky house; both not exactly commonplace dancefloor fillers, but neither are they demonic ankle-twisters. Lead single 'Bussin Down', featuring another Chicago scene heavyweight DJ Spinn, could be a genuine leftfield contender in end of the year song lists, while tracks like 'Pelvic Floor' that are brimming with irresistible old school rave piano riffs are clear indicators that this is an album aimed at areas of the dancefloor beyond those furiously flying feet.

If you enjoyed Toddla T's excellent **Skanky Skanky** then it'll take you no longer than a moment to appreciate the sheer goodwill of Women's Studies. It's a similar mish-mash of genres that are drawn together to create a record that is purely about letting loose and having a good time. As with Toddla's LP, not all of the songs are of stunning quality, but more fool anyone who tries to deny the good vibes that flow from within. This could well turn out to be the year's most refreshing party album.



13 & GOD.

OWN YOUR GHOST.
ALIEN TRANSISTOR.

REVIEWER – TOM BELSHAW.

When I was but 19 years old I spent seven long months working in a local boozer. I disliked it greatly but, to paraphrase my disgraced auntie, "I was young, I needed the money".

It was there I met a chap named Simon Babic, who shall be referred to as 'Simon Babic' for the sake of a disinterest in providing anonymity. One evening Monsieur Babic invited a small handful of his colleagues round to his digs, where he had laid on a lovely spread of Wotsits and cheap cider. We sat in a circle and waxed lyrical about philosophy and I experienced the first and only time I have been patronised while sitting on a bright pink pilates ball.

At the end of this evening, after many an inquiry regarding his choice in music, Signor Babic handed me two full hard drives containing his entire music collection. It was through this act of thoroughly pleasant piracy that I had discovered labels like Anticon and Definitive Jux and artists like RJD2, Atmosphere, Sage Francis, El-P, cLOUDDEAD and Sole. I spent the next two or so years passing this collection off as my own, introducing others to music they'd not heard before and enjoying the fact I was an über hipster by being a hipster before it was cool to be a hipster.

The May release of **Own Your Ghost** from former Anticon roster holders 13 & God made me start to Babic like a mother lover seeing as though I'd been out of the loop for a while. The collaboration between Oakland's Themselves and Germany's Notwist has been maturing since 2008. An inspiring mish mash of melancholy and blissed out guitar work coupled with the strange timbre of rapper Doseone and Germanic accented crooning makes for something pretty special.

From swansong 'Death Minor', with its menacingly mellow guitar strums, collapsing synth and wonderfully constructed spoken word set piece, to the aggressive tumbling beats of 'Sure As Debt' or the understated crunk of 'Janu Are', everything feels as though it's crafted with both groups' aesthetics perfectly intact.

Everything except 'Old Age', with its happy chords and saccharine lyrics, sounding more like something Cut Copy would fart out and blame on an unsuspecting bystander. Aside from that, the pure energy and excellent production on show here make for a really solid and tight album, which is pretty impressive for a seven-piece ensemble based on two different continents.

If Simon Babic were to buy one album this year, it'd most likely be this. And if you know him he'll probably give it to you for free.



CEX.

TINY CREATURE.
TIGERBEAT6.

REVIEWER – FRED OXBY.

Tiny Creature, the latest release from IDM producer Cex, marks his return to Tigerbeat6, the label he founded with Kid606 back in 2000. Although Cex (a.k.a. Rjyan Kidwell) has been rather prolific over the last 11 years, this record marks his return to the label after a nine-year spell of working with different imprints. Known for his forays into what can only be termed as 'comedy electronica' - complete with silly costumes, rapping during live performances and horrendously offensive album titles - it is often difficult to work out whether Cex's music is to be taken seriously or not.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, Tiny Creature is presented to us as something of a concept album, attempting to tackle questions of lust and desire through the medium of electronica. No mean feat and one which, in my opinion, he doesn't quite pull off. While the release notes contain utterances of 'cybererotica' and comparisons to Nabakov and De Sade, this "miniature synthetic opera" is not offensive, sexy or lustful. If it's all a joke, it isn't a very good one. If it's meant to be taken seriously, it is the most pretentious concept album this side of Shoreditch high street. Nevertheless, this record happens to be a very accomplished piece of production and is best enjoyed at a distance from Kidwell's persona and pretensions of grandeur.

I would be hard pushed to cite a weak track on this release, since each piece fits in perfectly with the one before. Warm and intriguing analogue motifs flow through the record, accompanied by discrete glitchy beats and mellifluous pads. At times it is challenging without ever offending, while on occasion it is sublime in its delicacy. Kidwell's experience is on full show as he playfully references reggae on 'Megamuse' with synth skanks and toys. Autechre inspired melodic hellishness features on 'Constellation Face' and 'Citterpated', a 19-minute ambient work which is my standout track of the album.

Musically, this is one of Cex's most accomplished projects. It has the uncanny quality of remaining varied and interesting while also fitting neatly into the sound of modern electronica. If it didn't have so much clunky branding, which betrays an attempt to seem avant-garde, this record would be a lot easier to appreciate as a whole. Although on the other hand, maybe Cex should be lauded for his efforts to take one of the most serious genres on the planet and inject a bit of silliness. Hung jury all round.



COBRA FIST.

THE LOST SCROLLS EP.
SELF RELEASED.

REVIEWER - BEN DOREY.

Cobra Fist are a new addition to Sheffield's musical landscape, with a gig supporting Gallops at the Harley in March being their only venture beyond the practice studio so far. Certainly one of the most surreal bands I've ever encountered, their music is like the soundtrack of a 90s arcade game boss battle. But it would be the best arcade game ever. The band's first EP is a strong showcase and comes rather nicely packaged in handmade sleeves made from old floppy discs.

The record mixes stoner rock, metal and 8-bit synth madness to build something both laughable and epic. It is serious and complex on one level, but what could be a rather tiring experience after a while is transformed by the tongue-in-cheek attitude they bring to their songs and stage show, which is delivered in colourful ninja regalia. The musicianship is admirable throughout, especially the drum lines, which would comfortably fill the footsteps of many a math rock hero. It's hard to fully describe the paradox of being fisted by a limbless animal, so I implore you to investigate for yourself.



BIODUB.

REISEGEFÄHRTE.
KI RECORDS.

REVIEWER - BEN DOREY.

Newcomers in an ever-growing stable of independent German labels focusing on a particular sound have released their first album with Biodub's **Reisegefährte**. Walking a path between the moody ambient techno of producers such as Efdemin and Pantha du Prince and sparser but equally emotive Berlin club music, this is a record at home in your headphones as well as in a club. Well, at home in a few clubs in Germany. This is techno that stems as much from the patterns and sounds of the natural world as the industrial one, and as a result retains an organic, almost acoustic atmosphere that initially seems paradoxical in a clearly electronic release. Biodub would be a better name for the genre itself than the artist.

Stand-out tracks include the well-constructed 'Sub Surfing', the most heavily dub-influenced moment on the album, with its swooning landscape of synthesised skanks and lilting delayed rhythms literally 'surfing' the sub heavy dubwise bass. Also impressive is 'Subsistence', which begins in a swirl of warm chords and manipulated field recordings and ends with a thumping 4/4 deep house beat. The title track sits as a beautiful finisher, its subtle and ambient swells progressing like a dubby version of Wolfgang Voigt's earlier GAS projects.

There is nothing groundbreakingly original about this release, but then the German techno scene is based far more on progression than the revolutionary nature of musical trends in the UK. Immaculately produced and intricately constructed, this album is for anyone with a taste for music that demands you really listen.



MOUNT KIMBIE.

HOTFLUSH DUO TALK ABOUT RECENT SUCCESSES.

INTERVIEW BY IMOGEN DECORDOVA.

Unmitigated hype is a serious accusation to throw at any artist and Mount Kimbie prove that a bit of mainstream accreditation is no reason to dismiss an act. The duo seem particularly undeterred by labelling and are keen to neither let it restrict them or force them to fit into a particular category. They've produced what many have considered to be one of the most essential releases of 2010 - **Crooks and Lovers**, which was released on Scuba's Hotflush label. A dense and hazy meander around the last 15 years of electronic music, garage, R&B, electronica and field recordings have been painstakingly combined with live guitars to wash it all down. They're creating a noise suitable for dance floor or for staring out of the train window moodily and pretending you're in a depressing indie film, a goal any album should aspire to achieve.

Kai Campos and Dominic Maker met at Southbank University. Having already played music in various bands the two began making electronic music and were joined by James Blake, the so called third member, for a number of live sets. Both Blake and Kimbie's popularity has reached dizzying heights for debut acts but, having toured extensively and been regular names at various dubstep and electronic nights around London, it's certainly not through lack of effort or talent.

Now Then had a brief word with Dom as the pair finished up their US tour and prepared for a series of gigs back home.

(Disclaimer: We didn't talk about James Blake.)

How was the tour?

It was great - really, really good. Loads of stuff went on. We played with a guy called Shigeto who's wicked. He does live drums over his beats. It was nice that they'd thought about it and booked someone doing a similar sort of thing to us.

What has the reception been like over in America? Has it been as strong over there as in the UK?

Yeah, to a certain extent. It's definitely a difficult market to crack. They're really into their hip hop and at the moment the younger generation are stuck on big dubstep DJs. But yeah, we were fortunate enough to do this thing with NPR, which is like public radio in America. We had loads of good feedback and loads of people came to the shows purely off the back of that, so we're pretty pleased with how it's been going out there.

What kind of reaction do you get towards your live set up? Do people tend to come in thinking you're going be hunched over your laptops?

Yeah, that's what they mainly think. Most people think we're just sort of DJing and playing live guitar over it, but it's a very live show and there's a lot of stuff going on behind the scenes.

I was reading an interview in which you lambasted Four Tet for just pressing play and wandering off. With your live instrumentation, is it a conscious decision to entertain or would you be doing it anyway?

It's just something that we've always wanted to do. Before we were ever making electronic music we were in a couple of bands, playing guitar and stuff like that. We definitely don't have a problem watching someone press play, it's just not something that we want to do. I mean I've seen hundreds of amazing Ableton sets and people who just do a laptop set - total respect for that. It's just what we want to achieve. I feel like the music that we do has got enough scope to be played live and developed in a live atmosphere. The main thing is that we're having fun doing it.

You've mentioned TV On the Radio as an early influence in terms of mixing electronic music with instruments. Any other surprise influences?

I'm a big fan of Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, quite a lot of metal. At SXSW we saw lots of hardcore bands and they were brilliant. I think Texas is quite a stronghold for that. Aside from that, we're into a lot of R&B. We listen to so many different things but nothing surprising. I guess the only thing you might consider surprising is that there's a bit of classic rock.

Is there anyone in particular who's influencing you at the moment or are you mainly getting on with your own stuff?

We generally hear a very small amount of new stuff at the moment except for the people we play with. It's been a lot of Warpaint, White Denim and Tame Impala. It's not a conscious decision, but that reverby, unclean sort of sound - just anything that's really catchy.

Do you find it seeping into the stuff you're creating?

Yeah I think so. We haven't written anything for ages but I'd imagine that when we do finally sit down it will all come through.

You have a new EP coming out soon.

Yeah, it's got remixes of 'Carbonated' from the album and two other remixes. We haven't been writing anything new recently. We haven't written anything since Crooks and Lovers, but I'm craving it. Throughout summer there are a lot of European shows and festivals stretching off into the distance, but hopefully in September it'll all settle down. Then we'll go on holiday or something and start writing again.

What did you think about the critical response to the record and how are you finding being thrust in front of a new audience?

It has been really bizarre for us. We come from a background where we've never really known anyone who's done that. It was strange to hear friends who aren't really that into music to say, "Oh, I saw you mentioned in The Sun today". It was really weird but good. It brought home the fact that there is a market for the kind of stuff we're doing and that, I suppose, is quite settling.

We were quite happy to stay underground, as that's where we've come from and I love that. I love that about certain types of music, but it's nice to appeal to a bigger audience. It was quite surprising really and we never expected any of it.

I saw you on the Abbey Road debuts TV show. What was that like?

We didn't know what to expect. It was quite daunting but once we were there it felt good. It's quite nice to have the ability to experiment a lot with what we're doing in front of people and actually be able to hear the subtle changes. Sometimes the subtlety gets lost in a club or festival environment. A lot of what we do is quite delicate so it's nice to show that.

What about the cameras?

They kept on the outside of a ring and I didn't really notice them. I was trying so hard not to mess up I sort of forgot where I was. We were conscious of the fact that we only had a couple of takes for the whole thing.

How do you make music as a duo?

It's very individual. Kai will be up in London I'll be down in Brighton, and we just write whatever we wanna write. We make something that we're proud of and send it to the other person. We send parts to each other and then kind of chop and change. There aren't any assigned roles so it's a very free and easy process. We're not that keen on working as a team when it comes to the writing aspect, but it's really good to have another set of ears.

I was watching a video of you guys playing a Norwegian church and it looked beautiful. What is your ideal setting to play in and how would you contrast the club environment with a sort of band night environment?

Our ideal spot is a small room. Our favourite that we've played in is a little place called the Golden Poodle in Hamburg. It's tiny - about 75 person capacity - and it's just amazing. There's something about having that intimacy that really works. Then we played Bestival and that was incredible in a different way. It's so big and we were sort of shell shocked, but we managed to pull it off in the end.

There's a difference in terms of the kinds of audiences you get, the sound and what you need to achieve with the set. At a festival you're looking to please in a much more energetic way, whereas if you're playing a church in Norway you're trying to be a bit more subtle, trying to explore and showcase the sound more. We're fortunate that we've been asked to play places outside of clubs, really.

We played in a cave in Austria, but that church was easily the most incredible venue we will probably ever play in. There were only about 60 people there but it was incredible. There were three acts playing and between acts they just played this solid drone music. I'd love to go back.

I would never think to compare you guys to that sort of ambient music, particularly not metal, but on Crooks of Lovers there are elements of it present. Do you listen to that kind of stuff at all? Bands like Sunn O)))?

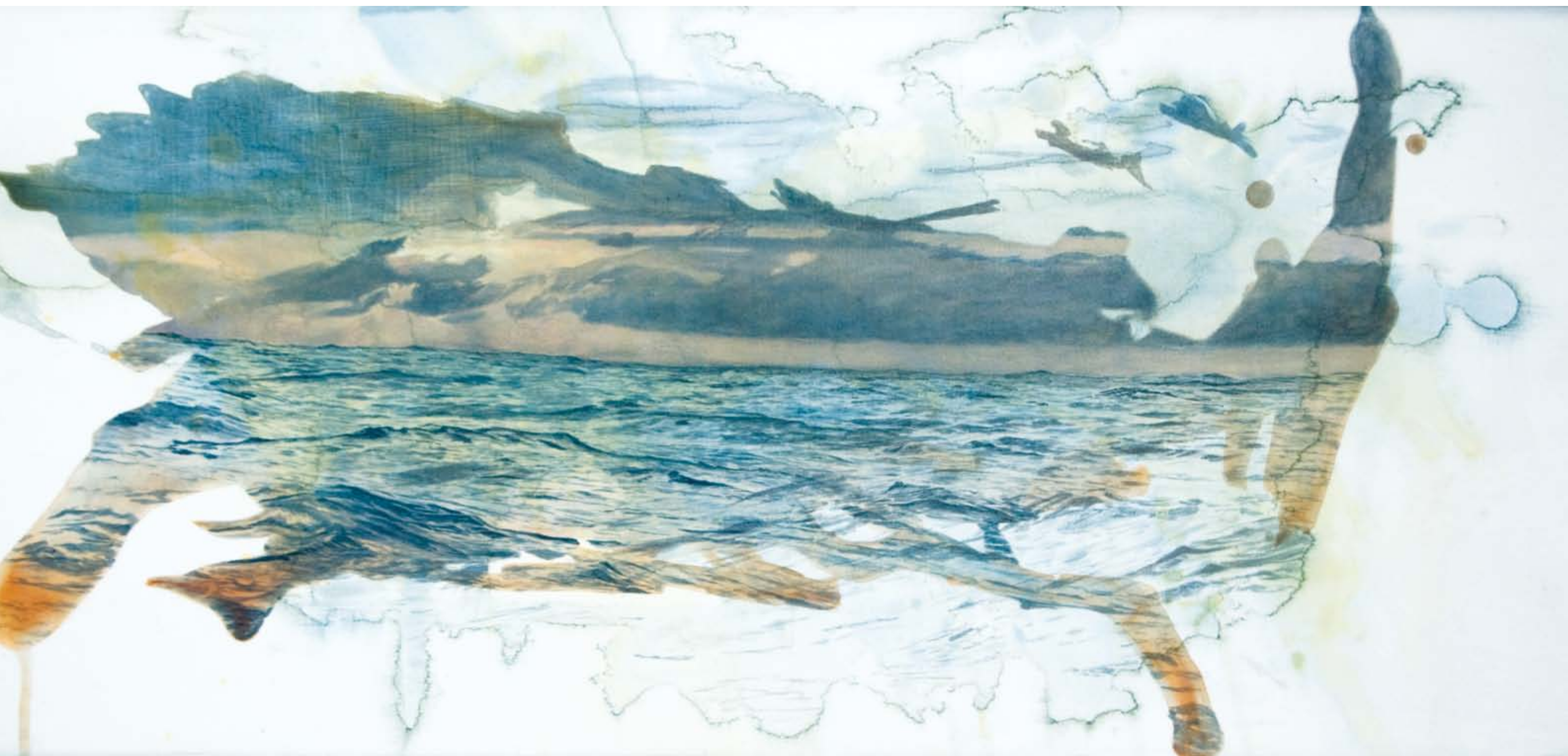
Not really. It mainly comes from the stuff that we use in our live show - guitar and distortion. We thought it sounded good and that sort of triggers ideas in your head. We don't really listen to any ambient music at all. People have said we really need to listen to Boards of Canada and stuff like that. I've tried it out but it's not really what I want to listen to all the time.

I guess we take elements of every genre that we like and bring ambience to all of them. I was actually quite surprised by how certain parts of the album are as ambient as they are. I think it mainly comes from the type of environment we are in when we're working. I live down by the coast so I'm constantly seeing the sea from my window. There's a lot of open space and you feel like you need to fill it with ambient noise.

The scene that you two have been associated with seems pretty popular at the moment. Do you ever feel like it is saturated or do you want to go in a completely different direction? What keeps you making music?

When I say we haven't written anything - we've actually spent a little time experimenting with different sounds. But it's never been a concern. We've always just known that we're constantly going to try and evolve what we're doing because we get bored of certain sounds. I think Crooks and Lovers is the top of where we wanted to take that sound. The next thing we do should be totally different. I think it'll have a lot more guitar.

We never really think about it - we just do what feels right. There's some great music coming out at the moment and like you say in other ways it seems like it's getting a bit saturated, but I feel confident in the scene in general, that it's going to keep evolving and keep surprising people.





PEACE IN THE PARK.

4TH JUNE @ PONDEROSA PARK.

FREE.

It's that time of year again. Time to choose between wellies and sandals, the safe route or living on the edge. Time to dig out those beads. Time to get down to Ponderosa Park.

Well, not right this second – sit back down and read on, tiger.

Peace in the Park is back for 2011 – bigger, better, stronger, faster and more gosh-darned peaceful than ever before. So get down to Ponderosa Park on 4th June from noon till 8pm.

The festival is free to attend for all and packed to the gills with stuff – a total of five stages, as well as a soundsystem tent, a tea tent featuring the No Limits Pop Up Cinema, circus performers, a cabaret bar, art and craft stalls, dance activities, workshops, live art and more. All this, topped off with catering ranging from scrummy cakes to hearty burritos, and drinks including everything from a lovely cuppa to a fully stocked real ale bar. Can you believe this is free?

This is the eighth Peace in the Park festival and somehow the event goes from strength to strength every year. It is run by a not-for-profit collective that anyone can join. Every year it raises money for one local charity and one international charity – this year it's Sheffield Mind and Self-Help Africa.

Sheffield Mind is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year and during that time has worked tirelessly to support local people with mental health difficulties and their carers. The services they offer include volunteer work experience, supplying information, signposting, art therapy and counselling.

Self-Help Africa works directly with communities in rural Africa to help them achieve economic independence. They do this by consulting local people and facilitating the formation of cooperatives and farmers associations, as well as by supporting micro-finance programmes and encouraging sustainable development.

We at Now Then are proud to be involved with Peace in the Park and this year are not only running our usual stage, but also organising the stall bookings as well. Get in touch if you want a pitch. There's still time! Contact stalls@peaceinthepark.org.uk.

We're also still on the lookout for anyone who can volunteer some time to act as a steward on the day. If you're interested, please contact stewards@peaceinthepark.org.uk.

Want to help out in any capacity or get more info? Email contact@peaceinthepark.org.uk or visit peaceinthepark.org.uk.

See you there.

PAGE 52.

LINE-UPS.

Much, much more to be confirmed over the coming weeks.

MAIN STAGE.

Curated by King Mojo and Jumping Wizard.

East Park Reggae Collective.
Slamboree.
Balkan Bandits.
Jungle Lion.
Zacc Rogers.
The Chosen Family.
The Mother Folkers.

OPUS STAGE.

Mean Poppa Lean.
Louis Romegoux.
Renegade Brass Band.
Kill The Captains.
Bell Hagg Orkestar.
King Capisce.
James Tait.
Mantra Rhythms.

COMMUNITY STAGE.

The Peace in the Park All-Star Big Band (w/ special guests).
Ceilidh Party.
African drumming and dancing.
Samba band.
Choirs.
Poetry Slam.
Balkan and Electroswing DJs.

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Pete David and the Payroll Union

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Louis Barabbas

www.louisbarabbas.com

Featured WordLife Poet – Joe Kriss

◆ ◆ ◆
12.05.2011

The Cuckoo Clocks

www.myspace.com/thecuckooclocksuk

Mark Wynn

www.myspace.com/markwynn

Featured WordLife Poet – Stan Skinny

◆ ◆ ◆
19.05.2011

Richard Barry and The Chaps

www.richardbarry.net

Captives on the Carousel

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Featured WordLife Poet – Matt Black

◆ ◆ ◆
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Facebook – search ‘Opus Acoustics’





FILMREEL.

(DE)CONSTRUCTION.

There’s something to be said about an art form that makes you think of another whilst retaining a complete discernment of its own language.

I shall bypass a preamble here, in which I could go into depth about how that is not the case with Peter Greenaway’s output (entertaining in some respects, but showing off a knowledge of classic art in detriment of true cinematic vision), or elaborate on how a peripheral lecture on Architecture in my first year at university was more about Cinema than most of what our tutors would subsequently have to say. No. I shall choose to go straight to the point with my subject of choice. This is Filmreel. I’m going to write about a song.

Construção’ (Construction) is the title track of the groundbreaking 1971 album by Brazilian singer/songwriter Chico Buarque. Whilst the political and historical context of its release is utterly crucial to understanding its message, I would like to centre more on Buarque’s personal angle, as a man who understands and embraces the intrinsic poetry of the Portuguese language.

Contrary to the more light-hearted and often inconsequential flavours of the Samba that influenced him musically at an earlier stage, Buarque’s writing has become the paradigm of existential melancholy. His songs are renowned for taking the perspective of the woman with such a truthfulness and compassion that within seconds you forget that it is a male voice you’re listening to.

They are short vignettes which offer a moving glimpse into the human condition by means of very specific, precise and simple storytelling. The same applies to ‘Construção’, despite its invitation for us to share the last moments in the life of a man, instead of a woman. From a narrative perspective, these moments are succinct and carefully selected, highlighting what the entire existence of this construction worker has been.

The evocative opening verses say everything in that sense, as they begin by describing – in the past tense, but with an overwhelming sense of immediacy – how this man “loved that other time, as if for the last”, “kissed his wife, as if she was the last one”, “and his offspring, as if the one and only”; proceeding with him “crossing the road with shy steps”, “going up the construction, as if a machine”, “erecting on the upper level four solid walls”, “brick upon brick in a magical pattern”, “his eyes filled with concrete and tears”; and how he then “sat down to rest as if it was Saturday”, “ate beans and rice as if he was a prince”, “drank to the point of choking as if he was a castaway”, “danced and laughed as if he could hear music”, “and tripped in the skies, as if he was drunk...”, “and floated in the air as if he was a bird...”, “and finished on the ground like a flaccid package”; it then matter-of-factly concludes that “agonising in the middle of the public pavement, he died against the flow, in the way of the traffic”.

At this point, the instruments, which had remained restrained in a build up of anticipation and simply backed up the repetitive crescendo of the vocal melody, hit you loudly in almost dissonant notes. This momentary cacophony of sounds vividly evokes urban confusion, the sudden disorder of traffic and a disorientation of the senses – both ours and the character’s at the point of impact. And we’re only half way through the song, because what ensues displays an astonishing literary control by simply repeating the previous text with small alterations. The words are the same but

they trade places, enhancing or changing their meanings altogether.

This is worthy of Samuel Beckett or Harold Pinter and, although a lot of the double meaning is inevitably lost in translation here, I would like to highlight a few examples. We start again with how he “loved that other time, as if he was the last one” – immediately suggesting how the dying construction worker is faintly aware that his wife’s intimacy will go on without him; proceed with how he “kissed his wife, as if she was the only one” – in an internal confession of past or current adultery – “and each of his sons as if prodigal” – in simultaneous welcome and goodbye to his offspring.

Buarque’s sole commitment from this point onward is to the subjectivity of the text, which in turn serves the overlapping of the character’s recent memories, probably made unreliable by feelings of guilt and hopelessness. Crucially, he also invites our interpretation to cease to be rational and obey more to the empowering device of free association.

So, after the song’s only narrative revelation – in which the worker is described to have “crossed the road with drunken steps”, having gone up the construction in an over-confident manner and “erected on the upper level four magical walls” with “brick upon brick in a logical pattern” – absurdity begins to take over. This clarification of his state allows for every previously described detail to be heightened in a gradual transition from the momentarily exhilarated to the clumsily ridiculous in the eyes of others. Hence it finishes with him dying “against the flow, in the way of the passers-by”.

These shifts in the perspective of the events are what Cinema should be all about. To excel as an artistic expression, filmmaking needs to direct its tools, techniques and devices towards the core essence of what it aims to communicate. This is what ‘Construção’ does so magnificently, through the impressively lucid mind of Chico Buarque. His clarity of purpose is even more apparent in the shorter, sum-up return to the verses of his song. Delivered in a faster pace and backed by a whirlwind of musical notes, the mechanisation of this dying human being’s whole existence is acknowledged at the most personal moment: when life is sucked out of him in a last breath and he dies “against the flow, a nuisance for the Saturday”.

The statement ‘This is better than most films...’ has never been more accurate.

The lyrics of ‘Construção’ are available online, together with the video of a live performance of the song:

<http://letras.terra.com.br/chico-buarque/45124/>

JOÃO PAULO SIMÕES IS A PORTUGUESE FILMMAKER LIVING AND WORKING INDEPENDENTLY IN SHEFFIELD. HIS WORKS INCLUDE ANTLERS OF REASON AND AN ARRAY OF MUSIC VIDEOS AND DOCUMENTARIES. VISIT [CAPTURAFILMES.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://capturafilmes.blogspot.com).

WHAT’S ON.
MAY 2011.

OPUS ACOUSTICS.

5TH MAY.
THE RIVERSIDE.
FREE.

The debut of a new series of acoustic gigs and open mic events hosted by Opus, featuring appearances from Pete David & the Payroll Union, Louis Barabbas and Wordlife poet Joe Kriss. Free entry.

65DAYSOFTSTATIC.

6TH MAY.
QUEENS SOCIAL CLUB.
SENSORIA.ORG.UK
£11.50.

The Sheff lads perform a live soundtrack to the 1972 sci-fi film **Silent Running**, including original dialogue. First commissioned by Glasgow Music & Film Festival, this rare event could be their last gig until September.

A TASTE OF EDEN.

7TH MAY.
VENUE - TBA.
£10 ADV.

A warm-up for Scotland’s Eden Festival, with live sets from Orkesta Del Sol, Ryan James and more. DJ sets from Wayne Sealey, Junglist Alliance, Sequoia and Swank ‘n’ Jams. Loads more to be announced.

NOW THEN 3RD BIRTHDAY.

8TH MAY.
THE FORUM.
FREE.

After three years with our noses to grindstone it’s time for us to unwind. Come along and listen to Bell Hagg Orkestar, Zacc Rogers and Now Then DJs, as well as the astonishing magical talents of BenZ, free of charge.

LOW.

16TH MAY.
QUEENS SOCIAL CLUB.
£15 ADV.

The first show of a European tour supporting their new album **C’mon**. Definitely worth the ticket price.



C.A.D.S.
CREATIVE ARTS DEVELOPMENT SPACE
7 SMITHFIELD, SHALESMOOR.
07816418598. / CADS-ONLINE.CO.UK

CADS is a multi-purpose arts complex in Shalesmoor, ten minutes’ walk from the city centre. You might recall it from the Now Then front covers exhibition we did there last month or any of the other excellent exhibitions and Dirty Little Secret (DLS) parties going on down there.

CADS provide studios to rent for any form of creative activity. Their current tenants range from painters and jewellery makers to fashion designers, musicians and record labels. Based over two ex-industrial premises, they offer a range of options starting at £20 per week including bills.

The vision of CADS is to create a community of artisan productivity in which the facilities and services available assist individuals and the community. This is done through surplus studio space, free events, exhibitions, fundraising and creative networking.

CADS has a large range of versatile exhibition areas suitable for any type of activity, including art exhibitions, music performances, photography shoots, fashion shows and social meetings. All areas are available for hire by the day.

Their current program of events entitled Regenerate is curated by Sheffield Art Forge and has seen a series of collaborations with this fair magazine and mural commissions from local artists now adorning the courtyard walls. Work is also being displayed by internationally-renowned sound artist and music producer Mark Fell (SND).

CADS will be featuring performances from the aforementioned and a plethora of other local sound artists, in association with Sensoria Festival, on top of hosting a full-scale art commission and graduate competition worth £200 and three months’ studio space for each of the three selected winners. Visit sheffieldartforge.com for more information. Workshops will also be hosted by Faunagraphic during the May and August bank holidays, not to mention the Chief Theatre production of The Cat in the Rain between 18th and 21st May.

Also worth a nod is their Dirty Little Secret (DLS) events rooms, which host a varied mix of dance music, including resident house and techno event Collect! Check out the next one on 11th June with Matador - set to be another smasher.

FAVOURITES.
OUR PICK OF THE BUNCH.

SENSORIA.
29TH APRIL - 8TH MAY.
SENSORIA.ORG.UK

Sensoria Festival is a celebration of film and digital media that takes place across Sheffield at the end of April and beginning of May. There are far too many goings on to note here, but of particular glory will be a live soundtrack to 70s sci-fi film Silent Running performed by 65daysofstatic at Queens Social Club on May 6th. Also worth a look-in will be Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey, Way of the Morris, and Steel City Pulse, a percussion performance hosted in conjunction with Galvanize Festival to raise money for the Save Portland Works campaign.

Go to sensoria.org.uk for venues, dates and times.

SHEFFIELD THEATRES.
SHEFFIELDTHEATRES.CO.UK

This month we recommend two plays at Sheffield Theatres. Both have a comic bent and both will leave you with a smile on your face. First up is the anniversary stage adaptation of Yes, Prime Minister, based on the legendary BBC series. Will Jim Hacker and his team of advisors find salvation in dubious deals with the foreign minister of Kumranistan? Head down and find out for yourself between 16th and 21st May.

Our second preview is again anniversary related, as Sheffield Theatres celebrate the 50th anniversary of Samuel Beckett’s funniest play Happy Days. Featuring Pauline McLynn of Father Ted and Shameless fame, it tells the story of housewife Winnie and her husband Willie, who spend their days talking, preying and singing together under the blazing sun. Directed by Jonathan Humphreys, this bold new production will run from 20th May to 4th June. Don’t miss out on a giggle.

TAA SHEFFIELD.
19TH-21ST MAY.
ASKSHEFFIELD.ORG
ARTANDSOULKOLLECTIVE@GMAIL.COM

Temporary Autonomous Art events and exhibitions were born in London in 2001 to the Random Artists collective. TAA uses DIY culture tactics to create space for expression outside of the established art world elites. Reclaiming and reusing derelict urban space, TAA events host a hotbed of emerging arts crossing all disciplines, fusing traditional and contemporary media. The artwork has a dark and ominous undertone, while sharing a hope and beauty unified through the use of free space.

Visit the ArtSoulKollective website for more information.

Visit the ArtSoulKollective website for more information.

OTTO’S.
344 SHARROW VALE ROAD.
0114 266 9147.
OTTOSRESTAURANT.CO.UK

You may remember us drawing your attention to this immaculate place in the heart of Sharrow Vale last year. Well, we have got some news. As well as the delicious and authentic Moroccan dishes available throughout the week and on Saturdays, you now have the option of ditching the Sunday roast for the Otto’s Sunday Lunch. With four choices on offer for each of the three courses including our favourite fish tagine, it’s a welcome alternative to the Sunday norm. The Moroccan Night is also as popular as ever, featuring some of the most traditional Moroccan fare to be found anywhere in Sheffield and easily the snakiest hips you’re ever likely to be hypnotised by. Check the website for details of events, including the new and inimitable table magic shows by BenZ.

S7 ELECTRICAL.
42 TAVISTOCK RD.
07988 754104.

We all know that electricity is not to be underestimated nor approached without the proper tools and training. You may also have experienced the cowboy work of a standard, corporate rent-a-sparky who has half a mind on the job and one eye on the clock. Far from this are the team at S7 Electrical in Nether Edge. These lads are the epitome of friendly, reliable and trustworthy workmen. They do every job to the highest standard and clean up as they go. They actually care about what you think as it’s in their interests to earn your custom. As such they respect you, unlike the dead-eyed lad of 12 we recently had sent from Eon, who couldn’t even remember our names from his job sheet.

You can reach Toby on the above number about anything from a dodgy looking socket to a complete rewiring of your home, with energy efficiency and green technologies their specialities.

OPUS ACOUSTICS.
EVERY THURSDAY FROM 7.30PM.
THE RIVERSIDE, MOWBRAY STREET.
FREE.

Opus Acoustics is a brand spanking new venture from yours truly, launched to bring the quieter side of music and spoken word to your ears on a Thursday evening. Entirely free of charge (like all the best things), this regular jaunt will bring in performers like Pete David & The Payroll Union, The Cuckoo Clocks and Richard Barry & The Chaps to the Riverside on Mowbray Street in the coming weeks, as well as poetry from Joe Kriss, Matt Black and Stan Skinny.

As if that weren’t enough, a wine and cheese combo will be available each week for a tanner. Keep your eyes peeled for more line-up announcements.



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5. 18 BIKES
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